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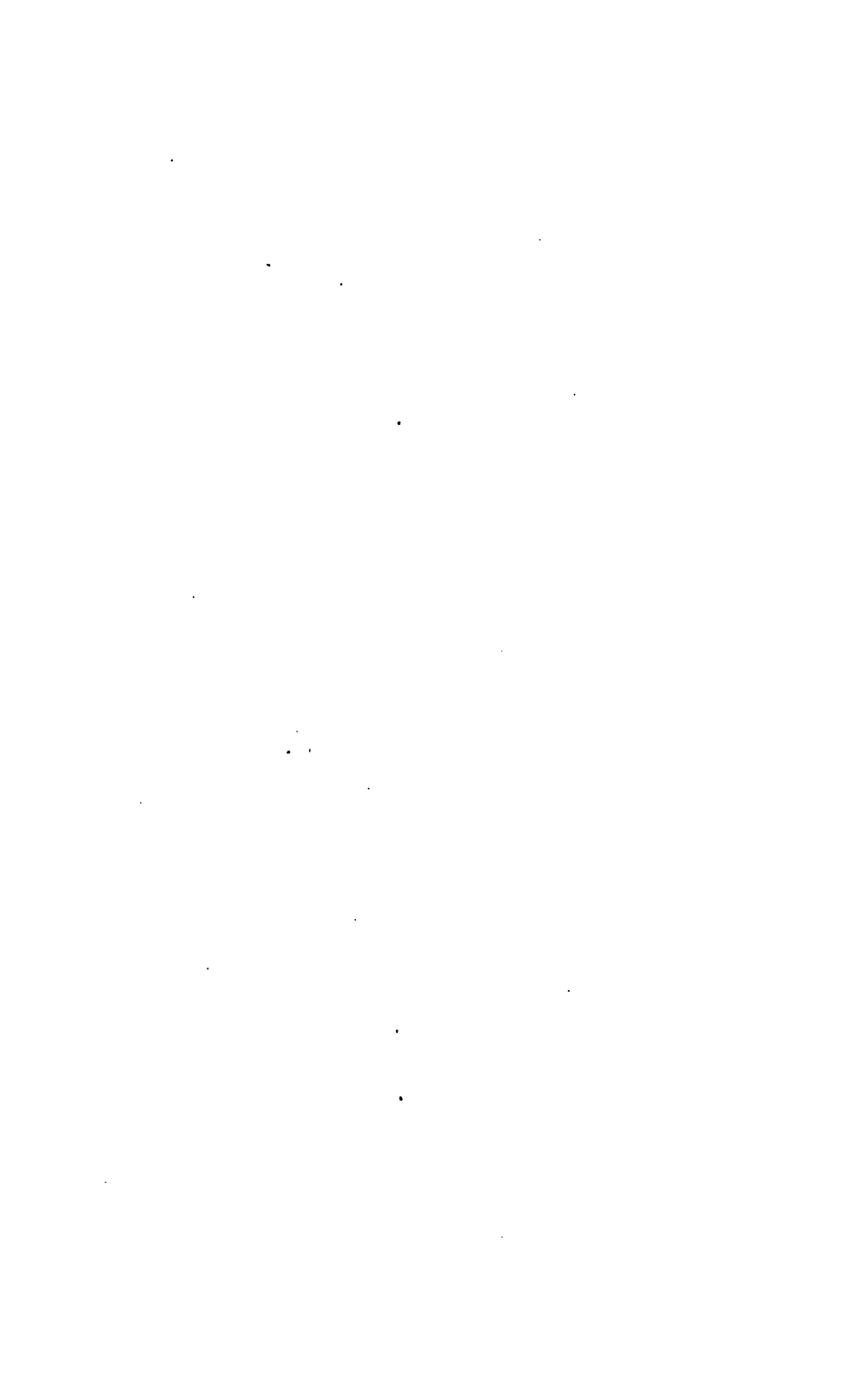
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## **The Dominie of Harlem**



# The Dominie of Harlem

BY  
ARNOLD MULDER

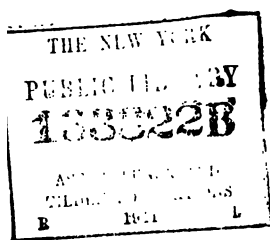


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# The Dominie of Harlem

## CHAPTER I

### THE DOMINIE IS A BACHELOR

PROMPTLY at half-past seven Jan Harmdyk shuffled up the aisle of the little consistory room. Some twenty-five rough-hewn faces glowered at him from the hard oak pews and in the nods of a few of the men there was an almost imperceptible jerk of impatience, in odd contrast to the usual expressionless demeanor of the people when gathered together for religious purposes.

Many of the farmers had quit their fields a half hour earlier than usual that evening. Violence had been done to their most deeply rooted feelings when they were compelled to hurry the milking and to break the even tenor of farm routine. This unusual tax upon nerve tissue had ruffled the feelings of the less stolid ones of the little congregation. A few in the consistory room even allowed themselves a slight expression of impatience.

Jan Harmdyk paid but little attention to the feelings of his neighbors. He was within his rights — not a minute late, as the loud-ticking clock on

the wall told him. Deliberately removing his hat as he neared his pew, he sat down with the air of one who knows exactly what he is doing and why he is doing it. He bowed his head piously in silent prayer for a moment and then looked up with an air of unruffled expectancy.

A solemn invocation, then a long Dutch psalm through which the twenty-five discordant voices labored, following as best they could the quavering tones of the leader — and Klaas Thielman stood ready to open the meeting.

Informal discussion since the naming of the trio had pointed unmistakably to the choosing of Student Van Weelen.

Disposed by nature and training never to “buy a cat in a bag,” the two dozen families that composed the Harlem Christian Reformed church applied their innate conservatism to their religion. The members of the large class of theological students who were to graduate in May had preached to the little flock one by one, before the husbands, properly advised by their wives, ventured to name a trio. Student Van Weelen’s name had been first on the list.

“That’s a good sign,” Mrs. Hendrick Slotman had said to her husband when he came back from the consistory meeting at which the trio was named. Mrs. Slotman had insisted that Hendrick should cast his vote for Van Weelen. Moreover, she had played politics as shrewdly as a suffragette.

“Suppose they put Student Van Weelen, what is a

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good one, on," was her line of argument, "and two poor students, then the people at the congregational meeting, I figure, will know enough to choose Van Weelen."

Van Weelen, Hulst, and Vanden Berg, therefore, were dinned into poor Hendrick's ears at all suitable and unsuitable times. Always in the same order — Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg. There being only four members in the consistory, Mrs. Slotman figured shrewdly that she could exert an influence of twenty-five per cent., provided she could succeed in stamping the three names indelibly and in proper order upon her plodding husband's mind — Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg.

Her persistency was not unrewarded. Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg were chosen — in the right order too — simply because it would have been as easy for the other three members of the consistory to learn to repeat St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians backwards as change the mind of Hendrick Slotman. The choice of candidates and their order even had become his own idea, and he would have scornfully resented any hint about his having been influenced by a woman in doing his work as a member of the consistory of the Christian Reformed church. He doggedly held out for Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg, and at least two of the other three members finally were compelled to yield.

Not without argument, however.

"Student Van Weelen is too young," said Klaas Thielman. "He don't look to me more than twenty-

five, and, you know, the Lord did not begin his ministry before thirty."

That was a hard nut to crack for Hendrick Slotman, but he expressed his opinion all the more forcefully that the only thing the consistory could conscientiously do would be to nominate Students Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg. The call would be found not to have been from above if any other arrangement were made.

The other members of the consistory were either uninstructed, or but vaguely so. In this lay Hendrick Slotman's strength. Their objections lacked staying powers. Jan Harmdyk however floored him for a moment.

"They say he ain't married," he said, "and that he ain't even engaged. A minister, say I, ought to be a married man."

"That's what I say," declared Gysbert Vissers, breaking into the discussion for the first time.

There was a long pause during which the three fathers of the church sat meditating the weighty objection Jan Harmdyk had brought against Student Van Weelen. Klaas Thielman slowly stroked his stubby beard, stained and streaked with brown tobacco juice; he was sore oppressed with the responsibilities of being chairman of the consistory. In the mind of Hendrick Slotman a mighty battle was going on. Here was something his wife had not reckoned on — a minister should be a married man. He was about to observe that Jan Harmdyk's suggestion merited serious consideration, when a

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familiar voice seemed to ring in his ears — “Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg!”

“Well, what do you think?” asked Klaas Thielman, to break the perplexing pause.

“My vote goes for Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg,” answered Hendrick Slotman with an air of finality that admitted of no appeal. Slotman spoke the Frisian dialect which in Harlem was considered synonymous with unalterable persistency.

But Jan Harmdyk, in the same dialect, said with unmistakable emphasis, “My vote will never go for a giddy young feller who ain’t even married or engaged yet.”

“There is great danger that he will bring division in the church,” put in Gysbert Vissers, always ready to support the latest speaker.

“We’ll get into hot water with him,” continued Jan Harmdyk. “He will have to have a house-keeper, and there will be no end of scandal. An unmarried minister don’t look just right.”

“He might be induced to marry one of our own girls,” offered Klaas Thielman hopefully.

“That’s true too,” said Gysbert Vissers.

“A minister marry a Harlem girl!” Jan Harmdyk’s question was a sneer. “Now, say, who ever heard of such a thing?”

“No, no, it ain’t to be thought of,” wailed Gysbert Vissers, “not to be thought of.”

Klaas Thielman named three or four examples of ministers espousing country girls, but Jan Harmdyk interrupted him:



"That's different; they was engaged with the girls before they started out to learn for minister. But give me one who married a country girl after he took a church, and then a Harlem girl! Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"It ain't been done," admitted Klaas Thielman mildly, because he noticed Jan Harmdyk's anger getting the better of him, "but that ain't sayin' it can't be done."

"With God all things are possible," interrupted Gysbert Vissers rather irrelevantly, but no one smiled.

"Look a' here," persisted Jan Harmdyk vehemently, "he ain't a married man: that's against him, but that ain't all; he also went to such a university. I have it from Dominie De Weerd. There they learn the boys evollotion. Do we want a minister what has learned evollotion?"

Unspeakable horror traced its lines on Gysbert Vissers' face.

"We must never leave Calvin and the fathers," he counseled sagely.

"But that was before he started to learn for minister," objected Klaas Thielman. "The professors in our school would n't leave a man believe in evollotion."

Gysbert Vissers: "That's true too."

"What for a thing is this evollotion?" asked Hendrick Slotman innocently. "I heard so much about this new heresy but just the *fine* of it I never did understand."

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The next minute he regretted the question.

"You not know what evollotion is and then vote for a student who they learned it in such a university!" burst out Jan Harmdyk scornfully. He made a dramatic pause. "It's believin' that man was made from a monkey, whereas the Bible, the only word of God, says man was made in his image, out of the dust of the earth created he him, and God himself put into his nostrils the breath of life."

"I knew *that*," said Hendrick weakly, "but what I wanted to know is why they call such a heresy evollotion."

Jan Harmdyk was caught, and to cover his discomfiture he resumed the marriage question.

"Such a man what learned so high won't take a Harlem girl, you can just figger on that."

Gysbert Vissers: "There's something in that too."

"Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg," was the burden that sang itself in the mind of Hendrick Slotman, and his vote was a foregone conclusion. Klaas Thielman was not keen on Hulst and Vanden Berg, but his almost impulsive championship of Student Van Weelen left him no other course and still seem consistent. As chairman he had the last argument, just before the vote was put, and it was this fact that landed the vote of Gysbert Vissers for Van Weelen, Hulst and Vanden Berg.

Jan Harmdyk vehemently dissented and took great pains in circulating his minority report throughout the congregation during the time be-

tween the consistory meeting and the evening when a minister was to be chosen. Although he tried to make capital out of the fact that Student Van Weelen had gone to "such a university where they learn them evollootion," the simple people took more naturally to the charge that the favorite candidate was not married.

An unmarried minister was like a new species to the Hollanders of Harlem, and they eagerly listened to Jan Harmdyk when he eloquently set forth, in his positive Frisian dialect, what evils would come upon the congregation if so youngish and so frivolous a boy should be chosen. The last minister who had led the congregation beside the still waters had been a native of the Netherlands. Solid and substantial as he was in every way, sons and daughters had been multiplied unto him much in the manner of Job.

Before him there had been a succession of pastors, all of whom had entered the seminary when well advanced in years. And in addition to the inevitable suggestion of youth and frivolity that was sure to cling to an unmarried minister, the mere fact that they had never been served by any but heads of families was reason sufficient why the people of the Harlem Christian Reformed church should look with suspicion upon a bachelor.

Moreover Student Van Weelen's personal appearance was against him according to the arguments of Jan Harmdyk.

"David had a beard," said he, "and all the

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elders in Israel were bearded men. When the gentile king cut off the beards of the emissaries of the King of Israel the men were too much ashamed to go back to their own people. They were as much ashamed as if I should send you to *De Stad* and they should strip you naked there and send you out on the street. A beard is man's natural growth, and I say that a minister what shaves is not livin' accordin' to the Word of God."

Jan Harmdyk himself grew a little fringe of straggling, grayish hair under his chin, wearing his beard much in the manner in which the Harlem children wore their old-fashioned scarfs. It left part of his chin exposed to the razor.

A neighbor's son, one of the frivolous younger generation that sometimes spoke English and indulged in various other godless vanities, remarked,

"If the heathen king had shaved only the chins of the emissaries, and had left a little beard about the throat, I suppose the men would have felt a great deal less ashamed — like walking the street in a night-shirt instead of stripped."

Jan Harmdyk savagely spat out a stream of tobacco juice, but controlled himself for the sake of the argument.

"That's different; times has changed, and as long as a man does not set up to expound the Word, he kin wear his beard the way he likes."

"Yes, times have changed," the Younger Generation presumed to object, "and so have ministers."

"Samson was consecrated to the Lord," con-

tinued Jan Harmdyk, not deigning to notice the argument put up by a mere youth, "from his youth up was he consecrated, and no razor was ever upon his head. It was a custom in Israel to bring up those children in this way who were to lead the people."

A number of farmers listening to the conversation nodded hearty approval. The biblical phrases had a familiar ring to their ears, and if Jan Harmdyk had the Bible on his side, as he evidently had, he must be right.

"But if the style of beards has changed for other men," persisted the youth, "it may have changed for ministers also."

"Don't you think it," snapped Jan Harmdyk, encouraged by the approval of his neighbors; "and besides, Christ had a beard."

"How do you know?" ventured the youth in desperation, feeling that the argument was going hopelessly against him, but repeating his question, "how do you know?"

"How do I know? How do I *know*?" The words were charged with annihilation. "Ain't I got a Bible at home? Do you think I'm a heathen who don't read the Bible? Even though the world is fast comin' to the time what the prophet speaks of, when there shall be wars and rumors of wars and then the end shall come, that ain't no reason why I don't read my Bible. Why, right there in the nineteenth chapter of Matthew of my *Staten-Bijbel* is a picture what proves it."

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"That's right," "that's right," "that's true," came from several of the listeners.

"Why, sure, it's true. Who ever heard of such a thing? How do I know? Do you think I ain't got no eyes. Even though they ain't so young as some, they can see pretty good, and some young fellers might do well to use their own a little more than they do."

Downed by the overwhelming pressure of public opinion, the Younger Generation slunk shamefacedly away; and it was decided in the little group that a minister, to be thoroughly orthodox, must be a married man and must grow a beard.

Jan Harmdyk passed on to find another audience and to conquer more worlds.

It was like a triumphal march through the congregation. But there was poor generalship on Jan's part in one particular: He talked only to the men; and a man, even a Hollander, convinced without the consent of his wife and daughters, is a precarious object to pin unquestioning faith to.

"It is true, he ain't married," admitted the feminine contingent of the congregation, "and a minister ought to be a married man." Having so far yielded implicitly to the dictates of local custom, they further had a good deal of respect for the unwritten canon of the beard. "But even if he is a bachelor, that ain't sayin' that, he'll never get married. And even if he ain't got no beard, can't he grow one?"

To their own minds this logic seemed unanswer-

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able, and it fully appeased any twinges of conscience they might have felt when Jan Harmdyk's arguments were first presented to them by the lords of the households.

Hulst and Vanden Berg were unpopular among the women; Mrs. Slotman had gauged their sentiments in this respect with a shrewdness that was largely instinctive. Student Van Weelen appealed to them for more reasons than one.

"He kin preach," they declared after he had delivered several of his sermons in the Harlem church, and even the men could not deny the candidate's ability in that respect.

But it was not that; at least that did not tell the whole story.

"Then why do you keep on talkin', talkin', always talkin' about Student Van Weelen?" said Klaas Thielman a little impatiently. "Ain't there others that kin preach?"

"Yes," admitted his wife, "but I like Van Weelen best."

"He is so noble looking," ventured the daughter of the house, by way of accounting for the mystery.

"But that ain't got nothing to do with a minister," declared her father, although he admitted the fact and was himself not at all opposed to the choice of Van Weelen.

Perhaps the girl had instinctively hit upon the true reason after all. Physical attraction is extremely subtle, and it is often underestimated because people fail to recognize the true dignity of

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the body. For centuries theologians have told them that it is nothing but a prison-house, in spite of the positive statement that the physical body is a temple — a temple for God's indwelling.

Feeling that he had the situation well in hand, Jan Harmdyk secretly enjoyed the impatience of his neighbors as he sat in his pew in the consistory room. Not only was he within his rights but he felt an approaching triumph.

After their show of impatience the little group of men looked apprehensively at the opposition, applying this title almost subconsciously to Jan Harmdyk, thanks to the persistency of the women.

His arguments they could not meet, but every mother and daughter at home had impressed it upon these rugged men that Student Van Weelen was *so noble looking*.

Naturally the very first ballot was a surprise to Jan Harmdyk. He was fighting shadows. There were only five votes not in favor of Van Weelen!

Instantly he was on his feet. What was the congregation coming to, and did they think for a moment that such a call could be from above? A minister who *believed* in evollotion! Yes, siree, *believed* — you could just depend on that, seein' he had gone to such a university where they learn 'em that; and him not married or engaged even!

The people fairly cowered under the Frisian eloquence, and no one had the audacity to offer an objection. But that Student Van Weelen was *so noble looking* had been ineradicably stamped upon



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the minds of the men, and Jan Harmdyk encountered a stone wall.

Klaas Thielman, as chairman, finally was called upon to attempt to make the call unanimous. Four of the opposition yielded very soon.

“Even if the whole congregation deserts the path of righteousness,” thundered Jan Harmdyk, “I will stand on the Lord’s side.”

## CHAPTER II

### ONLY ONE DUTCH GOD

**D**OMINIE VAN WEELEN entered upon his labors as pastor of the Christian Reformed church of Harlem all unconscious of the storm that his election had caused. He quietly took possession of the little old-fashioned parsonage, and before beginning work on his first sermon, he figured out on a writing pad how he could possibly save enough out of a salary of \$550 a year to buy a canoe. Finally deciding that it would be an impossible feat, he determined to build one himself. Having eased his mind with this determination he gravely opened his Bible in search of a text.

Meanwhile the Harlem tongues had been busy again. Student Van Weelen's letter of acceptance had been odd, and oddity in the minds of the Harlem people was usually synonymous with what was improper. They did not understand or tolerate it any more than the average conventional society understands or tolerates genius. From time immemorial it had been the custom of ministers accepting a call extended by the Harlem Christian Reformed church to declare solemnly that it had "pleased God in His great wisdom to direct him to minister unto them." There were various ways of expressing this

sentiment, and the minister who succeeded in ringing the changes on it longest scored the greatest triumph.

But Student Van Weelen's letter failed to mention this supernatural guiding hand. When Klaas Thielman, as presiding elder, finished reading the letter the people of the little congregation looked up expectantly as though waiting for a postscript. The fact that the prospective pastor had been sent to the congregation at the personal solicitation of the ruler of a million of worlds could not have been forgotten. Transcendentalists of the deepest dye in matters of religion were the people of the little church, and a pastor failing to tell them in well-rounded phrases of the divine origin of his reason for coming to them was like a senator failing to make good on his credentials. Only in the case of the minister it was a much more serious matter.

Moreover, Student Van Weelen's letter of acceptance was very brief; and the people set little store by wit, while brevity they did not count among the virtues. He simply stated exactly when he expected to arrive in Harlem (in this connection he forgot the indispensable phrase "the Lord willing"), thanked them for the honor conferred upon him, and expressed the hope that his ministry would prove to be a mutual blessing to them and to himself.

That was all. For some time the people were too dazed to express an opinion. Not until Mrs. Harm Zandbergen had climbed into the family "plat-

form" buggy and had settled herself comfortably, with the gray "duster" tucked properly about her skirts and her hands folded piously in her lap, did she open the discussion with her patient husband.

"I told them right along that a student would n't be no good for our congregation. If he ain't smart enough to write a longer letter than that, how is he goin' to preach for an hour twice a day?" She had been responsible for Harm Zandbergen's vote, but feeling that a tide of criticism was imminent after the reading of the letter of acceptance, the good lady, anxious to join the crowd, bethought herself of her ancient advocacy of choosing a minister instead of a student.

"*Ja, vrouwe,*" said Harm over his shoulder from the front seat, "I'm afraid he will not last long." He took a liberal chew of "Rob Roy" out of his tobacco pouch and tried to make the family horse accelerate his jog by hitting him with the free ends of the reins.

"Young people nowadays do not think so serious as they did when I was a girl. My father used to say that the young people of his day was so much worse than when he was a boy, but what would he say if he was living now?" Mrs. Zandbergen sighed deeply.

Her husband did not think it necessary to reply. To him this theme had become threadbare.

"The young people today, they don't know what there is to do in this world to get prepared for the next," continued his spouse primly. "We're al-

ways sayin' that the Reformed church is so loose and easy, but if a *Christian* Reformed minister starts sending out that kind of letter we'll soon be as bad as them."

"Huh, huh," grunted Harm Zandbergen, "get-dap, Sam."

"There was Dominie Landman, when I was a girl. I mind his letter as though it was yesterday. The elder had read one of Father Brakel's sermons — them was really sermons — an hour and a half long; nowadays the young ministers have all they can do to keep it up an hour, and then they don't give you the pith of the matter like Brakel. But as I was sayin', he had preached an hour and a quarter before beginning to read the letter. He told my father afterwards there was fourteen pages! We didn't get home till twelve that noon. But that was a letter! And then when you hear two or three lines like Student Van Weelen today!" Mrs. Zandbergen was unable fully to express her disgust.

"When I was a girl —" Harm Zandbergen looked critically at a particularly good stand of corn across a neighbor's fence, and his thoughts wandered off to crops and soil preparation and harvesting and scarcity of rain and other kindred subjects. Arrived home Mrs. Zandbergen had not nearly done justice to her theme but she ended the monologue perforce with a to-be-continued-in-our-next inflection.

Dominie Van Weelen's fingers were cramped with

writing. Straightening out the index finger with a slight twinge of pain he promised himself that a typewriter would be the next luxury he would allow himself after paying for the material for his canoe.

Walking up to the window with its little square panes he let his eyes rest fondly upon the windings of the river dimly visible through the trees a half a mile from the parsonage. He fingered the callous in his hand luxuriously — the result of many a twilight row upon another river near his father's farm back in Jersey. As he stood thinking of the delicious sting of a stiff breeze, and of the soft light over the marshes of the river bottoms when the sun has almost set, there came a radiance into the minister's eyes that was almost a love-light.

He half regretfully turned back to his crowded little table and took up his pen. Then yawning lazily he sat back to think. But the theological thread had been snapped by the vision of the river and marsh, with crickets chirping their early evening song. Finally giving up the attempt he went to the kitchen for a talk with Mrs. Wachs, his housekeeper.

She was engaged in the week's ironing, her healthy looking round face suffused with a deep red as she bent over the kitchen stove.

"Zoo, Dominie, sermon finished?"

"No, but I am tired of writing." Dominie Van Weelen answered the woman's vernacular in the purest Holland at his command. Instinctively in-

terested in the language and its noble literature he had been fortunate enough to attend the only university in America where there was a regular chair in the language of Queen Wilhelmina. Consequently the diction and style of his sermons bore traces of the influence of Professor De Vries, Ph.D., just as the thought of them was vitally affected by Dr. Dawson of the Department of Sociology.

"Will Dominie have a chair?" continued the solicitous Mrs. Wachs. "Wait, I'll get Dominie the armchair from the sitting room."

"No, don't bother about me; just keep on with your work. I'd sooner sit here on the edge of the table."

Mrs. Wachs was doubtful about the propriety of a minister sitting on the edge of a table — in his shirt sleeves at that, with sleeves rolled up to the elbow. But she gave in — Dominie knows all things; he must know what is proper.

Mrs. Wachs cast another furtive look at the minister's dishabille. For goodness sakes, he wore a belt in lieu of suspenders! Of all unheard of things this was to Mrs. Wachs' mind the most astonishing. Never having kept house for a minister before, she had never seen one who was not arrayed in his long, dignified Prince Albert coat and wearing cuffs at a proper length from under the sleeves. That a minister should ever dress for mere comfort was out of the range of her imagination.

Noticing the half-questioning look of his house-keeper Dominie Van Weelen said apologetically,

"I should have put on my coat but I expected it would be pretty warm in here with you busy ironing."

Mrs. Wachs had nothing to say and the conversation dragged a bit for a while. The portly dame stood a good deal in awe of the minister and looked with corresponding disdain upon the other women of the congregation not so fortunate as she to be the house-keeper of Dominie.

"A beautiful river we have here," said Dominie Van Weelen, feeling around to draw her out.

"Yes," was the unexpected rejoinder, "God is good."

Nonplussed, the minister tried another tack.

"Do the boys of the congregation do much boating and fishing?"

"No, most of the boys of the congregation are bad enough without *that*. Their fathers and mothers keep them busy on the farm most of the time, for an idle brain is Satan's workshop."

"But don't they engage in any recreation at all? They don't work all the time?"

"But that's because they don't obey their fathers and mothers, and he who honors his father and mother 'his days shall be long in the land which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee.'" Mrs. Wachs spoke with the glibness common to the people of Harlem when quoting Scripture.

"But do they never have picnics and 'parties' and such things?" the minister persisted.

"Picnics? parties?" Mrs. Wachs forgot about



the "bosom" shirt she was ironing. "The *Reformed* people do *that*. Why, *they* even have a choir in the church. Is not that a shame for people who call themselves Christians?"

Dominie Van Weelen did not answer the question directly. He felt that the case required delicacy.

"The young people of today are *goddeloos* enough without lettin' them have such vanities as parties and picnics," persisted Mrs. Wachs.

The minister sighed deeply as though something precious were slipping away from him — a light-green canvas canoe, afternoons on the river, scouting parties in the woods, midsummer camps.

"Why, think of it," continued Mrs. Wachs glibly, now that she was started on a congenial theme, "in the Reformed church last year some of the young people went so far as to want an English class in the Sunday School. Next thing you know they 'll be wantin' the minister — if they ever get one again — to preach in English."

"Well?" The question was a mild and almost an amused one.

"English ain't a language to preach in," declared Mrs. Wachs dogmatically. "It is too frivolous and not in place in a church building, especially not in a Christian Reformed church."

This staggering bit of local dogma was pronounced with a conviction that seemed unshakable.

"But there are thousands of ministers who preach in no other language than the English," argued the

...

"Yes, Reformed church ministers and Presbyterians and Methodists and such other *light* kind."

Dominie Van Weelen saw that evidently she believed there were no English speaking ministers in the entire Christian Reformed denomination, and he did not have the heart to undeceive her just yet. Besides, the woman's attitude was interesting.

"But why do you think English is not as good a language to preach in as the Dutch?" he asked sympathetically.

"Well, the Heidelberg catechism is in Dutch," was the rather combative answer. "If the church fathers had thought that the English was just as good why did n't they write it in English?"

"Maybe they were not as well at home in it."

"And then there is the Bible," continued Mrs. Wachs, disregarding Dominie Van Weelen's observation. "When I was a girl I was in De Stad one Sunday and saw them running around with such an English Bible under their arms — with them thin black covers and no clasps to them, and they rolled them up like an almanac. That's what an English Bible is."

"But because people do not treat it with respect is hardly a good reason for despising the English Bible."

"But the English Bible ain't so orthodox as our Dutch Bible."

This was entirely new theology to Dominie Van Weelen.

"What makes you think that?"

"Dominie Landman said so, and he came to our church direct from the Netherlands, so he ought to know."

The young minister thought it possible that a man's patriotism might have got the better of his common sense. He recalled an argument he had once had with a native of the Netherlands in which the latter vehemently maintained that the quality of Netherland gold was far superior to the American product, whether it came as the manufactured article or as raw ore.

"But don't you think," the minister persisted experimentally, "that the young people of the church would be more interested in church work if at least one of the services were in the language which they are taught in school?"

"That's what the Reformed church young people said too. But that's all wrong. In church and in catechism is the only place where the young folks can keep up the Dutch—they don't learn 'em the Bible in school, and when they read it there it is in English yet—if the church goes and makes the services of the Sunday School English the children will soon not know any more Dutch, and then they will leave the teachings of Calvin and the fathers." That to Mrs. Wachs' mind was the ultimate stage of depravity.

"But Calvin did not preach or write in Dutch."

This bit of information completely staggered Mrs. Wachs. If anyone but Dominie had said it she would promptly have called the veracity of the

statement in question. But a minister cannot lie.

"Calvin — not in Dutch? You mean Calvin?"

"Yes, I mean the same Calvin you mean. There was only one."

The minister was human enough thoroughly to enjoy the poor woman's look of complete mystification.

"Last night I saw you reading Johannes Bunyan's *Christen-reize*" (*Pilgrim's Progress*). He made the pronunciation of the name and of the title of the immortal English allegory as broadly Dutch as possible.

"Yes, if our young people would only read that more than such love stories, they would n't be so 'dum' when they join church."

The mention of Bunyan's work had revived Mrs. Wachs' drooping spirits, and she did not even ask herself why Dominie Van Weelen should have introduced so irrelevant a subject.

"I'm glad you think well of the book. I am very fond of it. But Johannes Bunyan was an Englishman and the book was first written in the English language."

Again there was a sharp impulse to incredulity in the mind of Mrs. Wachs, and again it was promptly suppressed by the thought that the speaker was a minister — and a minister, at least a Christian Reformed minister, cannot tell a lie.

She did not reply for a moment and then discreetly turned the conversation from Bunyan and his book.

"When my boys was n't married yet," she said,

"they was always sending for such magazines and such other *goddeloos* papers." She sighed deeply. "Children are so hard to control and to keep them straight before the Lord. I would have burned all those things; I can't read no English, but I saw the name of God in them several times and I thought it was a sin to burn that."

A sudden impulsive flood of respect surged over the minister at this blind but unquestioning loyalty. Mrs. Wachs spent several minutes in deep thought. Then her face lighted up.

"Johannes Bunyan may have been English," she said, "but after all, there is only one Dutch God!"

How Dominie Van Weelen succeeded in reaching his study without betraying himself to Mrs. Wachs and scandalizing that poor woman for all time to come he never knew. When he had recovered sufficiently to think coherently he felt rather weak, and the fit of laughter had left tears in the corners of his eyes. He tried to resume the writing of his sermon, but instead of oratorical periods his fountain pen persisted in writing, "only one Dutch God," "only one Dutch God." To compose his thoughts he took a walk to the river.

Mile upon mile it stretched out before him in its winding, devious course, and finally flowed into the majestic Lake Michigan. For more than a quarter of a century many of the Hollander farmers had lived in close proximity to it, and not one in a hundred had ever thought it worth while to buy or build a boat or canoe. When the summer resorter

came from Chicago and went boating, the hard-headed farmer smiled intolerantly at the vanity and the loss of time. He would spend hours discussing with a neighbor whether the Christian Reformed church had been justified in its secession from the Reformed church in the early seventies, but a half hour spent bathing the spirit in the calm beauty of the river, feeling the tiny wavelets chugging against a canoe, renewing the spirit by feeling the body in the gentle embrace of the water-god, was waste of time.

Dominie Van Weelen wandered far from the highway to where the wood and under-brush along the shore were thickest. Seeing no sign of human he quickly and deftly stripped. For a moment he poised his splendid young body over the bank. Then he swiftly shot through the air and disappeared below the surface.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WILL OF IMMANUEL SOMMERS

**I**T was Mrs. Wachs who told Dominie Van Weelen the history of the will of Immanuel Sommers. That this will had any bearings upon the fortunes of the Christian Reformed church of Harlem was a fact that any member of the church would have vehemently insisted upon, but exactly in what way very few could have explained adequately. The fact was, Immanuel Sommers had been dead so long that some of the people of Harlem had ceased to tell of his eccentricities.

But Mrs. Wachs was a masterful woman whose memory was as exceptional as her convictions were unchangeable. Dominie Van Weelen had gleaned snatches of information about the will from other members of his church, but Mrs. Wachs was the only one who could give the story in its entirety.

She was dusting the minister's study and sat down on the horsehair sofa for a chat. Dominie Van Weelen finished the sentence he was writing and then turned to pay respectful attention. He liked Mrs. Wachs very much, and a newsy chat with her was like a refreshing shower.

She eyed the fountain pen a few moments, then asked timidly if she might hold it in her hand.

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Wondering what was in her mind Dominie Van Weelen handed it to her. Inspecting it closely for a few moments, she exclaimed,

“ *Heden! heden!* and you write with this? ”

“ Yes, I ’ve used it for several years.”

“ And you don’t got to stick it in the ink all the time? ”

“ No, that is n’t necessary.”

“ *Heden! heden!* ”

The minister made clear as best he could to her limited understanding of things mechanical the mechanism of the fountain pen. She interrupted his explanation with many an exclamation of “ *heden! heden!* ” before she satisfied herself on this point. Finally she asked innocently,

“ And can you write English with it too? ”

“ Certainly,” said the minister, trying hard not to smile.

“ Well, well!” varying her exclamation for once, “ what wonderful things there are in this sinful world! ”

Dominie Van Weelen politely agreed with her that science and invention are responsible for numerous wonders; but he was a bit surprised that a woman of Mrs. Wachs’ native intelligence should be enraptured with a fountain pen, like a baby gurgling at the moon. His suspicion that she had an ulterior purpose was gradually confirmed.

“ Are you sure it writes English just as good as Dutch? ” she persisted. The minister assured her that such was the case. Hastily writing a few Eng-



lish words on a scrap of paper he handed it to her for inspection.

"I don't read no English," she said with just a suggestion of pride in her voice, and handed back the slip of paper.

Dominie Van Weelen did not answer. It was tolerably clear to him that she was anxious to resume the discussion of the relative merits of the Holland and the English languages as vehicles of orthodox religion. However, he did not care to give her an opening for a discussion that was not likely to benefit either one.

But Mrs. Wachs tried again.

"Meester Hazelkamp, what I kept house for before I came here," she said with apparent irrelevance, "once bought such an organ from a man what came around to sell them."

Dominie Van Weelen tried to appear interested.

"He was so smart," she continued, "that he did n't have the organ with him on his wagon, but had pictures of it in his book. 'I don't want no organ what can play English,' says Meester Hazelkamp; 'I had such an organ once,' says he, 'but my boys and girls was always playin' it and the other boys and girls in the neighborhood learned them a lot of them songs in English song books. They called them *gospel hymns* and such like, but I put a stop to it,' says he, 'before it was too late. I sold that organ,' says he, 'and I'll never buy no other what can play English.' The agent he laughed, and declared up and down that he would never sell an organ what could play Eng-

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lish, because it was such *een goddeloos* language, and that he did n't believe in leading the young people on the broad road. The fellow, he talked that religious that Meester Hazelkamp bought the organ on the spot and paid cash for it. And those *goddeloose* children of his never said a word then, but later, when the organ was brought to the house, the agent was n't almost out of the yard before they was playin' them gospel hymns again.

"That was nine years ago, even before Immanuel Sommers died," she continued, when Dominie Van Weelen offered no comment on the remarkable incident.

"What about Immanuel Sommers?" he exclaimed, glad to divert the conversation into more profitable channels. And he presently found there was one subject that interested Mrs. Wachs more than the total depravity of the English language. That theme she was soon safely embarked upon.

"Ain't you heard all about Immanuel Sommers? *Heden! heden!* and you've been here three weeks!"

Dominie Van Weelen encouraged her to start *in media res* by modestly admitting that although he did not know the fine points of the history of Immanuel Sommers, he had learned something about this apparently interesting deceased.

"Well, you see," continued Mrs. Wachs eagerly, "Immanuel Sommers was queer, but what else could you expect from such an Episcopalian?"

"An Episcopalian in this community?" interjected Dominie Van Weelen with considerable sur-

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prise. "I thought there never had been anyone here but Reformed and Christian Reformed."

"That shows they ain't told you everything about Immanuel Sommers," was the triumphant answer, and Dominie Van Weelen knew he was doomed to hear all the details.

"Twenty-eight years ago you would n't have knowed this place. I was here then and so I know all about it. Even the name was different. *Harlem* was chosen later when the Hollanders came in. What do you think the irreverent Episcopalians had called it?"

Dominie Van Weelen smilingly assured her he did not know.

"Babylon!" Horrible irreverence of a godless people! said the face of Mrs. Wachs. Dominie Van Weelen could not suppress a smile.

"Yes, they was all Episcopalians, every last one of them." From the tone Dominie Van Weelen knew there could be only one more horrible indictment, namely, that they should all have been Catholics; so he merely helped Mrs. Wachs over this oasis for theological argument by refraining from comment.

"As I was sayin', they was all Episcopalians," continued Mrs. Wachs a bit disappointedly, "and Immanuel Sommers was the worst one of them all." (In other words, translated the minister to himself, he was the most religious man in the community.)

"Then the Hollanders moved in," continued the garrulous old lady, not thinking it necessary to give the exact date of the *then*. "My husband was one

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of the first ones to buy a farm here, and pretty soon a lot of others came and bought the land of the Episcopalians. Seein' they was all English they did poor in farmin' here. We was all sons and daughters of the Hollanders who came to America with Dominie Van Raalte in 1847."

At this point she paused, trying to make up her mind whether her next question could be looked upon by the minister as an insult to his intelligence, but she risked it.

"You know all about the Van Raalte colony? I thought you bein' from the East might not be clear on it."

Dominie Van Weelen assured her he was familiar with the main facts of this staunch old Dutch minister's immigration to Michigan, leading his congregation thither to escape religious persecution in the Netherlands.

"Well, my father and mother was on the first boat load that came across, and my husband's folks came later. The things they went through here was some-thin' terrible."

"And then when you were married you decided to seek your fortunes in a new place and came to Harlem," suggested the minister, to prevent her from going into the irrelevant details of the sufferings of the Hollander immigrants.

"Yes, you guessed it right," admitted Mrs. Wachs. "We had a good chance to buy the land cheap here, seein' the English could n't make a go of farming, and we moved to Harlem — called Babylon at that

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time. It was a dangerous thing to do because there was Episcopalians all around us, and there was no church where the Word was preached and there was no catechism classes, and none of the things what we Christians hold dear. For me and my husband it was not so bad, seein' we did n't have no children then, but some of the other families had a lot of them."

The minister was becoming fidgety and he philosophically made the observation to himself that patience is a rare virtue.

"But then more of the Hollanders came, and afterwards still more," continued Mrs. Wachs a little more briskly, "and pretty soon there was more Hollanders than Episcopalians. Our people bought out the English and they moved away. For a long time there was only three English families left, and then afterwards Immanuel Sommers was the only one that was left."

"The last of the Mohicans," suggested Dominie Van Weelan.

"What?"

"Never mind, I was thinking of something else."

"Ministers is always thinkin' about their sermons even when they ain't preachin'. That's what I told Ezra Harmdyk once when the wicked youngster said they did n't earn their money seein' they work only one day a week. Five hundred and fifty dollars is a lot of money all right, but I always say a minister has to dress nicer than a farmer, and he's got to keep up his position." By this time Dominie Van

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Weelen deeply regretted his unlucky reference to Cooper's hero.

"The trouble was," continued Mrs. Wachs, after various excursions into semi-sociological discussions, "there was almost as many Reformed church families as Christian Reformed. But at least they were Hollanders and better than Episcopalians," she added magnanimously.

"Then you held services together?" ventured Dominie Van Weelen indiscreetly.

"Together?"

"Yes, since there were so few Hollanders in the community."

Mrs. Wachs made up her mind that he was testing her, assuming a part to sound the strength of her theological convictions.

"We never fell as low as that," she said with firm assurance. "The Reformed people went so far that some of them even went to hear the Episcopal minister when he still preached here. But we never did and we kept our faith pure."

"How many Dutch families were there here in all?"

"Eleven for the first five years, and then others came fast till now there are about fifty."

"And these few families had two churches?"

"No, they done it just like now. They had two ministers but only one building. And first for a long time they did n't have no building at all. That's how Immanuel Sommers got mixed up with our affairs."

"At last!" exclaimed Dominie Van Weelen.

"You see, Immanuel Sommers was well off and he had been living here all his life, and that's why he did n't want to move away when all the other Episcopalians left. He was in the seventies and said right along he'd end his days here. He did n't have no wife or children. Immanuel Sommers had been kind o' queer all his life and that's why he had never married!"

Dominie Van Weelen was on the point of making a witty observation, but fear of throwing Mrs. Wachs off the track restrained him. He might as well have indulged himself, for the garrulous old lady went off on a tangent without any suggestion on the minister's part. But in the midst of her moral remarks on the folly of a man remaining single he finally succeeded in throwing in a reminder of the main theme.

"Oh, yes, as I was telling you, Immanuel Sommers stayed here when the others went away. We could n't make much of him because we could n't understand his talk very good. But he lived real peaceful and quiet even though he was an Episcopalian."

"Did he attend church?" asked the minister fearing another excursion into side issues.

"Yes, he did, and just think, one Sunday he'd go to the Christian Reformed preaching and the next week he'd go to hear the Reformed minister. And he never understood a word of neither one, but he said it was his duty to go to church. He was regular, that he was, and well-behaved, even though he was an Episcopalian."

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"And then he made a will and died?" suggested the minister encouragingly.

"No, that comes later. You see, he kind o' got fond of a lot of the people here, and one time he said to one of the elders as how he did n't have a relative in the world and did not know what to do with his money when he should die. The elder gave out afterwards that Immanuel was goin' to leave his money to the Christian Reformed church and that spoiled it all. If he had only kept still about it we would have had it when the old man died; but as soon as the Reformed people found out about it there was a great deal of trouble."

"They wanted a slice of the melon?"

"No, it was worse than that. They wanted it all. They sent delegations to Immanuel Sommers and told him as how they deserved it a great deal more than us, and made promises to support him till he should die, and spoke him fair all the way through. That set our consistory agoin' and they also sent a delegate to Sommers. That's the way they kept it up, and Immanuel Sommers was kept busy day and night to receive the delegates from the two churches, and he tried to satisfy both."

"Rather foolish, wasn't it?" interjected her listener.

"Ja, but that just shows what those Reformed people will do. Things got so bad one night they had a big fight right in Immanuel's house. Both churches had sent a delegation on the same evening. They got to arguin' an' disputin', an' Immanuel Som-



mers sat there not understanding half of what they was talkin' about and tryin' his best to keep them quiet. Then he got mad an' sent them all home sayin' he 'd give his money to an Episcopal hospital."

"And that 's how his will was finally connected with our church?" said the minister—"a sort of might-have-been affair?"

"No, you 're too fast for me. The next day the old man got over bein' mad, but he did n't say nothing about what he was goin' to do for a long time. Then one night he invited the consistory of the Christian Reformed church and of the Reformed church to his house. He told them he was sorry he 'd got mad about the money and that he had at first intended really to leave it to an Episcopal hospital. But he says he had always lived here and he would n't feel right to send his money outside, so he was goin' to leave it to build up religion in the place where he was born and where he had lived all his life. He said that neither the Reformed nor the Christian Reformed church was his faith and he did n't understand what the difference was between them. Just think of that, he did n't know the difference between us and the Reformed. That shows anybody what those Episcopalians know about religion."

"So he left part to both?" asked the minister.

"No, you don't quite guess it. He did n't leave his money to them. He offered to build them a church."

"So that 's why the two congregations are using the same building for their services?"

"Ja, that 's it. You see, he built the church with

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his money and then he gave it to the two congregations, and they have been usin' it ever since."

The rest of the story was soon told because now that he had been given a hint of the solution Dominie Van Weelen used the direct question method to elicit the information he desired. It appeared that Immanuel Sommers had left detailed provision in his will for the use of the building after his decease. He had provided for a board of trustees that was to be in charge of it and that was to make all arrangements in regard to its use by the two congregations. The committee was to be made up of two members of the Reformed church, two of the Christian Reformed church, and one who was not to be a member of either church.

"And did it work?" asked the minister.

"It would 'ave worked all right if the people of the Reformed church had been reasonable. But they did n't stand for no reason. The idea of them wantin' to hold revival meetin's in the church; and yet they call themselves Christians!"

Involuntarily the minister smiled.

"So there's always been trouble," the old lady continued. "Now we've got a minister and they ain't. Why can't they let us have the church all day and come to hear you preach instead of holdin' readin' services in the afternoon?"

"But two years ago they had a minister and you did n't," said Dominie Van Weelen gently, "how did you manage then?"

"But that was different," cried Mrs. Wachs argu-

mentatively; "you could n't expect us to go to a Reformed minister!"

"But when do they hold their revival meetings?" asked the minister. "I did n't hear of them before."

"They don't hold them, because the board put a stop to them, but at first they held them during the week in the evening. Who ever heard of such a thing? But now for a long time there ain't been much trouble."

Dominie Van Weelen felt tempted to ask on what basis the Christian Reformed people objected to revival meetings; but knowing that the answer would be the usual one, that the true way to heaven was to be sought by means of a catechetical instruction in the Heidelberg catechism, he resisted the impulse.

"Immanuel Sommers died nine years ago next April. First the board had a great deal of trouble, as I was sayin', about the revival meetin's, and besides, the Reformed church people was always wantin' everything; but after a while things got kind o' quiet and there ain't been a meetin' of the board for the last five years. Two of the members are dead, and they ain't appointed others in their places."

"A situation like that might cause trouble one of these days," mused the minister later when alone in his study, but other matters caused him to dismiss it from his mind.

## CHAPTER IV

### "OUR ECHOES ROLL—"

**W**HEN Dominie Van Weelen accepted the call extended to him by the Christian Reformed church of Harlem he had but a very imperfect idea of the character of the people among whom he was to labor. Born and bred in a community of Hollander farmers in an eastern state he had learned to love the language and the traditions that dated back to William The Silent and his ancestors. His parents and neighbors had been members of the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands, and they had clung to the same religious traditions in this country. Coming from a stock of serious-minded men and women the boy grew up with but one purpose in view — to serve as a gospel minister; and his father and mother never thought of their son in any other rôle when he should have grown up. It was largely this taking of his profession for granted that prevented him later from going into other fields that lured him.

During the boy's senior year in college a professor in sociology cast his spell over him, and only a hint or two were required to get the susceptible pupil passionately interested in the western university of which the professor himself was a graduate. The taste of

social science that the small eastern college offered was not enough for Charlie Van Weelen whose heart was soon afire with dreams of the social salvation of the world and of the coming of the existence when the "lion shall lie down with the lamb." Moreover he was only seventeen at the time of his graduation, which was considered too youthful an age to begin a theological course.

These considerations helped to win over the boy's parents to the idea of his taking a course in other than a theological school until he should have reached years of greater maturity. But when the boy announced that he wished to matriculate in the great western university that had only the year before figured in a heresy scandal, it was hard for the pious parents to reconcile themselves to his point of view. In the first place, a university was looked upon with a great deal of suspicion as an institution where all kinds of forbidden knowledge was taught. But a university that had a member on its faculty whom a church had condemned was doubly to be guarded against. The fact that it was the Methodist church that had ousted from its fold the heretical savant was all the more damnatory for the institution that kept the instructor on its faculty. The Methodist church was looked upon as one of the group of denominations that made the path to heaven culpably smooth and easy for its members and that was far too liberal in its views. If *such* a church objected to the theology of a man how inexpressibly heretical he must be!

Charlie Van Weelen might have hidden from his unsophisticated parents the fact that Dr. Dawson was the very man who was luring him to the university. Their idea of a university was so hazy that it would not at all have been necessary for the boy to go into particulars. Sociology was merely a word to them, and a word of which they did not know the meaning. But Charlie Van Weelen was not the boy to win his parents' consent at the price of leaving them in the dark about anything he thought they had a right to know.

"I want to take three years of social science in Dr. Dawson's department," he told his father simply when the matter came up for serious discussion.

Anger and pain struggled for predominance in the old man's heart; but he knew from past experiences that when his son had once definitely made up his mind to a thing, very good reasons had to be advanced to turn him from his purpose. The boy tried as best he could to impart to his serious-minded parent the vision of a world socially redeemed, a vision that had often lit up his face with a true love-light. But in these efforts the language was a serious barrier. The few scraps of social science taught in college had been given in the English language naturally, and the terminology, that is the frame-work of the living science, was but so much Greek to the father.

To reconcile his parents to the university course, Charlie Van Weelen promised to take courses in the Holland language under Professor De Vries, who oc-

cupied the only chair of its kind in any American university. A native of the Netherlands this instructor was supposed to be above suspicion in regard to his religious opinions. With this concession gained, but with many misgivings, the old man finally gave a reluctant consent.

Three years of hard work followed, but work that set the boy aflame with enthusiasm. Not half had ever been told of the wonderful personality at the head of the sociology department; and soon the boy, as he sat in the recitation room, became a worshiper rather than a scholar.

He left home with certain definite opinions in matters of religion. Constantly keeping in mind that after three years he was to enter the theological seminary, he determined from the very beginning to resist any assault upon his religious faith that the great professor might make in the course of his lectures. That the man erred in his religious opinions Charlie Van Weelen did not doubt for a minute; but in spite of that, his personality lured the boy on as to a source of inspiration.

Never had he anticipated the struggle he was to pass through. There came a time when all foundations seemed to have slipped away from him. Not a word was said directly about religion; and Dr. Dawson, who took a genuine delight in making the eyes of the splendidly built and serious-faced youth sparkle, did not realize that when the intoxication of his voice had passed away the spirit of the lad lay downcast in an agony of religious doubt. How to reconcile

Dr. Dawson's apparent religious opinions with the beautiful dream of social regeneration that he daily unfolded to his students, was a problem that tortured the boy until he sometimes fairly trembled with apprehension when he entered the recitation room of the great man. But enter he did, lured on by the spell of some intangible glory about the man that defied explanation.

His own reasons for his faith in a Calvinistic creed that had seemed all-sufficient began to look threadbare, and some of them childish. Moreover, it hurt him to find that none of the people whom he associated with in the university town had ever heard of the Christian Reformed Church. He met one man who had a vague notion that there was an institution named the Reformed Church of America — only because once in a speech Colonel Roosevelt had said that he belonged to that denomination. Back home the Christian Reformed church loomed up as the great church, and all who did not belong to it were like *hoi barbaroi* of the ancient Greeks. The Methodists, the Baptists, the Episcopalians, and all the others were no more than names associated with dangerous creeds. But here —

Here were hundreds of earnest men and women working for the salvation of the race, giving up comforts and making sacrifices that absolutely barred any thought of hypocrisy and desire for effect; here were beautiful conceptions of the duty of society toward the individual and the responsibility of the individual for the welfare of society both present and



the generations yet unborn; here was inexorable honesty in treating the laws that govern human life, and system in going about the work of making the world a better place to live in, and in making men and women more worthy of being called the children of God!

The children of God! The phrase would not down. It haunted the boy, and the old agonizing questionings continued. What about this God whom he had looked upon as a personal father ever since he could lisp a baby prayer? Though not yet familiar with Compté, the boy unconsciously swung around to that Frenchman's conception of the divinity of personal influence, and he began to substitute George Eliot's Choir Invisible for the throne of the Almighty of the orthodox churches.

In the middle of Dr. Dawson's lecture on Folk Ways, Charlie Van Weelen came to the conclusion that the only honest thing for him to do would be to cut loose from the teachings of his boyhood and renounce the faith that he had set out to champion.

Something in the professor's lecture had suddenly brought him to his Rubicon, and with characteristic earnestness he decided not to trifle with his convictions. The lecture was as far removed from religious or theological questions as it could possibly be, and had the speaker known that while he was enthusiastically telling of the laws that governed the actions and thoughts of the primitive man, his favorite student was facing a spiritual crisis, he would have felt the bitter sting of the man who fails in his most cherished

endeavor. In fact, Van Weelen's coming to a decision just at this point was merely a psychical anomaly — a trick of the mind which psychologists find it hard to explain. The impulse had lain hidden during months of the boy's spiritual agony, and suddenly, at a vague fleeting reference only distantly related to the thought, it had leaped forth into a definite resolve.

When the class was dismissed Van Weelen lingered in the recitation room and as was often his habit, fell quite naturally into conversation with Dr. Dawson.

"During the lecture this morning," he said simply because emotion was welling up in his heart, "I have come to the conclusion that you are right."

"Right about what?" asked the great man immediately interested. Familiar as he was with the enthusiastic side of the boy's nature, he had never suspected the dark struggle in the back ground.

"About religion and the origin of life and the ultimate end of society, and all that."

The great professor looked at him in perplexity for a moment and then said gently,

"Let's step into the office, Charles; we can talk there without being disturbed."

Seated in the comfortable office, Dr. Dawson said: "Now, Mr. Van Weelen, tell me all about it from the beginning."

And the boy did as he was told. He made the professor understand as best he could the point of view of the people among whom he had been reared. His own religious beliefs before he had entered the

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university were described in detail. Regaining something of his old time passion for the faith of his fathers, he stirred the imagination of the sympathetic instructor. And Dr. Dawson's intimate acquaintance with the faiths and creeds of primitive Oriental and African peoples, among whom he had gathered much of the data of his lectures, made him appreciate the boy's story better than another man would have done.

Drawing the boy out by a hint here and there in the course of the narrative, the professor elicited the complete story of the student's struggle against the encroachments of science. The fact that he was "cutting" another class to hear the student's story did not make the great man uneasy. The hunger of the investigator was gnawing at his heart; and here was a rare chance to show real human sympathy and do some tangible good instead of merely theorizing in a class-room.

"And now," said Charlie Van Weelen calmly, "I shall write home and tell them exactly how I feel. It will break my mother's heart, and father will hang his head in shame; but if you have taught me anything during these months I have been here, it is to be honest with myself and others."

"I am extremely sorry, Charles," said the great man gently, "that my lectures have had this effect upon your spiritual life. I would not omit a word from any of them, because they represent a section of truth as I see it. I appreciate your difficulty since I went through something like that myself once; I

suppose every honest man does at some time in his life. But since you say you have been influenced by my lectures, will you trust me so far as to take one bit of homely, and I believe timely, man-to-man advice from me? "

The boy nodded eagerly.

"Do not say anything to your parents at this time."

"But, Dr. Dawson, I must be able to look life squarely in the face."

"I did n't mean that. I never want you to be anything else but strictly honest, intellectually and spiritually; and if after a fair trial you decide that that is your only course, follow it. To be ashamed of convictions is cowardice. But you will grow, Charles, grow. Your development is not going to stop here. Your course seems clear to you now but other questionings will come and other problems will have to be solved. There may come a time when you will not be as sure of what you believe and what you do not believe as at this moment. Just now the intellect compels you. At some later time other forces of life may take hold of you and compel you to revise your beliefs. Besides, it is not scientific to form a judgment on insufficient data. Give me a chance; you have heard only half of the story. I do not know whether the rest of it will make you change your ideas; religion is so intensely personal. But I beg you to hear me out, and if after that you are of the same opinion as now, do whatever seems right and honest."

He affectionately squeezed the boy's hand and added tenderly:

"Will it be any comfort to you to know that I am a member of a Baptist church?"

The boy looked up in surprise.

"There are things in it that I do not agree with, but they are not essentials. And I find that I cannot afford to be without the beautiful idealism of Christianity; and teaching the theory of social service without at least some of the practice would be a very dead thing indeed."

"I'll hear out the whole story," said the boy as he left the great man's office.

Because of this interview Dr. Dawson guided the boy into social settlement work, and new wonders opened up for the eager student.

But with the new wonders came new questionings and new perplexities. Gradually the actual contact with poverty and distress brought back to the boy the certainty of something beyond science, or something that science would in time perhaps reveal. Eagerly clutching at anything that seemed like conviction, even though it was not yet by any means the unquestioning faith that had been his before falling under the spell of Dr. Dawson, he gradually came back to a normal mental and spiritual state. So much had been gained that in return for the blind trust in what others had said he now had a wide outlook that he would not have exchanged for fortunes. But how about his boyhood determination to become a gospel minister? There were the many millions

in the cities waiting to be served. The settlements had a fatal attraction for the student and they would not let him go.

Again Dr. Dawson came to his rescue; and the parents of the boy, as well as thousands of others who had condemned the great sociologist as a heretic, would have been surprised if they could have known that this same heretic was directly responsible for the boy's decision to enter the Christian Reformed seminary.

"I am not familiar with the creed of your particular church," he said when the two were once more seated in the little office for a conference at the time when Van Weelen was about to leave the university, "but I am sure it stands for uplift and purity. All modern churches that I am acquainted with do that. The difficulty sometimes is that they are too self-centered. They do not go into the high-ways and by-ways as much perhaps as they should; but that is all the more reason why men like you, with a passion for social service, should go into them. Even if you should go into some country charge, where you would least expect opportunity for the work you wish to do, you may find perhaps chances for real service that you had never dreamed of."

All through Van Weelen's seminary course this last sentence stayed with him. It stayed, partly because all the boy's inclinations were toward a country charge, in spite of his fatal interest in the settlements. His passion for work in the slums was in the nature of moral responsibility. The distress of the city weighed upon his conscience, as such things rarely

do to so intense a degree upon the consciences of older men; the seriousness of youth is unparalleled. The boy's love for the country was a physical matter. His splendid young body yearned for the open lake, the wide fields, the light fog hanging over rich corn-fields in the cool summer moonlight, like the breath of sleeping nature, the monotonous chirp of the cricket in the long grasses along the river.

The coming to a close of his three years in the little seminary found him weaned of his almost morbid seriousness, and when graduation day came he was a young man blessed with a body such as few men have.

When finally three calls came, two from the city and one from the little country church at Harlem, a decision was soon reached. The beautiful view of the river at Harlem was still fresh in the minister's mind. He stretched out his arms luxuriously with the physical joy of living. Remembering with a sigh of comfort what Dr. Dawson had said about the opportunity for service in the country, he sat down and wrote the letter to the Harlem congregation that caused so much comment because of its brevity and because of its numerous sins of omission.

Many of the boys in Harlem were round-shouldered, most of them showing signs of it before they were fifteen. Worse than that, many of them had the hang-dog look that is usually not associated with youth. Newspapers, whose makers live in cities, are always ranting about the health and vigor to be found

in the country; but many a country farming community does not bear out their statements.

After studying the question for a few weeks Dominie Van Weelen decided that the boys and girls of Harlem did not play enough. In fact, he found that they did not play at all. The farmer grudgingly let his boy go to school, and moreover the state compelled him to do so; but the average farmer's attitude was made plain to Dominie Van Weelen in a conversation he had on the subject with Gysbert Vissers. Gysbert had a son who had completed the fifth grade.

“That boy go to school some more? It's a waste of time. He ain't got it in him to learn. Gerrit Jan is goin' to be a farmer and a farmer don't need much schooling.”

“But he is still very young,” objected Dominie Van Weelen; “how can you tell as early as this that he is best fitted to be a farmer? I remember when I was a boy of ten farming was my highest ambition, but later I changed my mind.”

“*Ja*, but Gerrit Jan ain't goin' to change his mind. Better make a good farmer out of him, say I, than a poor stick in something else.”

“I heartily agree with you in that, but the point is here: Is a boy ten years old competent to judge for himself as to the choice of a profession?”

“Even if he ain't,” was the rather stubborn reply, “I know that it ain't in Gerrit Jan to learn, and so what's the use sendin' him to school? He comes in mighty handy weedin' beets, and when he's home I know he don't learn no mischief.”



Dominie Van Weelen knew, of course, without Vis-sers telling him, that the weeding of the beets represented the real reason for interrupting the boy's education.

"Why should I let the boy go to school longer? You can't make a boy learn when he ain't no good at it. I never could learn when I was young and Gerrit Jan is just the same way. If he learns his catechism every week he does enough, and if he don't know his questions you just tell me and I'll get after him!"

Gerrit Jan Vissers was not an exception in Harlem. The compulsory school attendance law was not as strictly enforced in those days as it is today, and the farmers took advantage of the laxity in every possible way.

Dominie Van Weelen decided at the start that the young people of Harlem must be taught how to play if in his ministry he was ever to help them develop into men and women who should be worthy of bearing the name of Christians.

At his second consistory meeting he broached the subject of a Sunday School picnic for the young people of the church.

"A picnic!" cried Jan Harmdyk, secretly glad that Dominie Van Weelen was beginning to make mistakes, "a picnic! Who ever heard of such a thing? I was just sayin' the other day that the Reformed people was gettin' into those kind of things instead of trustin' to the preachin' of the Word, and shall *we* do the same thing now?"

"It ain't right, I'm afraid," said Klaas Thielman mildly, although he had become one of the staunch supporters of Dominie Van Weelen; "we must be careful about them worldly things."

"Yes, yes," said Gysbert Vissers earnestly, as though he had been the first to mention it, "we must be very careful about the worldly things."

Hendrick Slotman did not think it necessary to add the weight of his opinion to this overwhelming sentiment.

Dominie Van Weelen braced himself for a struggle which he knew would be a hopeless one at least for the present.

Mildly but firmly he tried to impress upon the members of his consistory that the body is God's handiwork as well as the soul; that the maker of this wonderful mechanism exacts of his creatures that they keep it in proper repair; that a sin against the body is just as heinous a crime as a sin against the spirit; that there is a physical basis for religion and morality as well as a spiritual one; that the necessity of play and recreation for the young people of the church should be insisted upon as though it were one of the creeds, inasmuch as it is apt to fortify the boy and the girl against the assaults of the devil and helps them to be decent and pure.

All in vain. The consistory members, with the possible exception of Jan Harmdyk, listened to the minister's plea respectfully solely because a minister was making it; but they were not to be convinced. The only argument in regard to the body that they

could fully appreciate was that it should be a strong one. Strength can be turned into money. But in common with most country people the Harlem farmers had a notion that the health of themselves and their children was far superior to that of the dwellers in cities. Consequently they looked down in pity upon the unfortunates who must dwell there. But while his consistory members were thinking of physical strength as a producer of dollars, Dominie Van Weelen was thinking of it as a safeguard against social vice, of which he knew there is much more in the rural communities than the poet who lauds the simple life seems to realize.

"If your son or your daughter," he said, addressing the members in general, "should fall into a life of shame, would you be sure that you had been absolutely blameless and had not been in part responsible for their sin?"

All declared they would be very sure.

## CHAPTER V

### A PETITION

**J**AN HARMDYK was more or less isolated from the other farmers of Harlem because of the location of his farm. It was on a hill, and Nellie Harmdyk while in college was credited with having described it as a sand heap entirely surrounded by fertile farms.

Like most definitions this one was not perfect. It is true, Jan's farm was chiefly composed of red sand, but this fact had its advantage during wet years. There were indeed times when Jan was the only farmer in the community who harvested an abundant crop; and invariably in the springtime many of his neighbors' farms were flooded.

And it was invariably in the spring of the year that Jan Harmdyk's crops flourished. Of a Sunday he would let his eyes wander over the wide fields with intense satisfaction,—all the more so, it must be confessed, because in the clay bottoms across the gully, where his neighbors' farms were located, the short blades showed pale yellow as the result of too much moisture and cold. But the parching heat of the summer often reversed the situation. The rich soil of the clay bottoms then shot its succulent juices up into the plants; the pale yellow gave way to a dark

green and the stalks became firm and heavy. But the same sun that in exceptionally dry summers caused the clay bottoms to flourish sucked the moisture out of Jan Harmdyk's red sand and stunted the growth of his crops. And at such times Nellie's description of the farm seemed very apt. Her father's desire for rain and more rain became a mania, and the very fact that he was isolated from the other farms invited invidious comparisons between his crops and those of his neighbors.

It was chiefly to learn something about a petition addressed to the county drain commissioner which, it was alleged, was being circulated among the "clay-bottom" farmers that Jan stopped planting potatoes and jumped across the little streamlet that flowed in the bottom of the gully, to chat with Jake Wagenaar who was still busy with the spring plowing. Since Jake belonged to the Reformed church, however, it was natural that the conversation should develop into a theological dispute instead of a talk on drainage. Moreover, Jan Harmdyk did not care to launch into the subject openly. He merely hoped that his neighbor would drop a hint about the petition in the course of the talk.

"Zoo, Jan," the farmer greeted him cheerfully, "warm, eh?"

"Zoo, Jake; *ja*, it's pretty warm. I wish we'd get a little shower,—enough to settle the dust."

Jake Wagenaar did not see fit to take advantage of the opening Jan had given him to discuss the proposed drain.

"Did you see that streak of dust goin' down the road?" asked Jan after a pause.

"The man on the bicycle?"

"*Ja*, that's our Dominie."

"Your Dominie! Well, well, well, and he rides on a bicycle?"

"*Ja, ja*," commented Jan as though in confirmation of the other's unspoken thought, "a minister ridin' a bicycle don't look just right. It's gettin' more scandalous right along. When he first came he wanted to hold one of them picnics what your church allows, and now it's ridin' a bicycle. Pretty soon I'll bet, he may even try to start one of them new fangled revival meetin's."

Jake Wagenaar flared up at this reference to a practice sanctioned by his church.

"That's just like you seceders — throwin' stones at revival meetin's when you ain't never been to one in all your life."

"Well, even if I ain't never been to no revival meetin's," retorted Jan hotly, "I seen the results of them; and by the fruits ye shall know them, you know."

"There you go again: the devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. You seceders think you are so fearfully pious but you know the Bible also says that the heart of man is treacherous more than nothin' else, ain't that so?"

"If you had been better grounded in the Heidelberg catechism and had been less taken up by them revivals you'd know better what's in the Bible and

what ain't, I'm thinkin'," said Jan Harmdyk sarcastically.

Jake Wagenaar was at a loss for an answer. He was not very sure of his ground in quoting Scripture, and to cover his discomfiture he became good-natured.

"Really, Jan, I can't see why you should be so down on your own minister. I think Dominie Van Weelen is a fine fellow, and most of us Reformed people hold the same idea. What I can't see is how such a man ever turned into a seceder dominie. He ain't no more like a Christian Reformed than I am."

"That's just what I lay up against him," said Jan.

"Would n't it be a joke," continued Jake, paying no attention to Jan's take-off, "if he should backslide and come over to us?"

"Well, if he did, that would be the only chance you people'll have to ever get a minister," answered Jan still refusing to become good-natured—"at least as long as you don't get no church of your own."

Jake flared up once more.

"Who ain't got no church of their own? Just because you *afgescheidenen* have a minister and we ain't, ain't no sign that the church belongs to you. Even though we only hold readin' service we use the building as much as you do, and if we should start the revival meetin's again we'd use it a great deal more."

"You people are always quarrelin' about usin' the building," retorted Jan irrelevantly; "when Immanuel Sommers died it was understood there was n't

to be no words about it. And here you go talkin' about it like an old woman."

"Who started it, I'd like to know," was Jake's defense.

"I did n't, that's one sure thing. I always say, as long as the two churches ain't rich enough to have each a church of their own, let's make the best of it."

"*De drommel* you do! Who's always talkin' when our revival meetin's come up for discussion? Why, man alive, you say more about that one subject than all the others put together, and that's goin' some, I'm thinkin'. We never held a revival meetin' in the buildin' yet but you made a howl." Jake no longer considered it necessary to be good-natured since Jan was not threatening him with Bible quotations.

"Who would n't talk about that?" snapped Jan Harmdyk. "It's our duty to fight against that. We only agreed that you Reformed people should believe what you like, but revival meetin's is degradin' to the building. It ain't proper in the house of God."

"That's what you say, but we think different. We might as well object to your Wednesday evening catechism class. What would you say then?"

"All I'd say is that you don't know what you are talkin' about. That is accordin' to Scripture, and your church itself believes in that; and I can show you any number of texts that the revival meetin's ain't."



Jake Wagenaar would have liked to ask Jan to do so because he doubted the statement. But because of his own limited knowledge of Scripture he did not risk the question. As a matter of fact, Jan banked on his adversary's well-known deficiencies along this line and took a chance for the sake of making the statement strong. Jake therefore took refuge once more in the good-natured consideration of Dominie Van Weelen's human qualities, in the discussion of which he felt he had a slight advantage over Jan.

"All you've got against your Dominie, as I understand it, is that he's young and strong and likes to go fishin' and swimmin', and don't wear a sour look all his wakin' hours. But that will come in time if he stays long enough in his present charge!"

Jan Harmdyk chose to disregard the remark.

"Anyway," continued Jake, "he kin preach, and do it better than most ministers. I go and hear him every once in a while. My wife she says I should n't run after the Christian Reformed, but I like Dominie Van Weelen."

"Yes, he kin preach," admitted Jan, "he kin *preach*. But there ought to be more to a minister than preachin'. I said right along from the start, before they ever voted him in, that he don't look one bit like a minister."

Jan shook his head doubtfully. Despairing of getting any information on the proposed drain from Jake Wagenaar, he once more jumped across the little stream at the bottom of the gully and went back to his task of planting potatoes.

Jake Wagenaar's horses slowly trailed their way across the field, the shining surface of the plow-share turning over the earth and leaving a dark rich furrow in its wake.

"Jan Harmdyk is in a cranky mood today," he said to Klaas Thielman who was working across the fence on the forty adjoining Jake's farm. "The way he carried on about your Dominie was a sin. Really, he made him almost as bad as a minister of the Reformed church!"

The speaker winked mischievously at his neighbor, who, although himself a member of the Christian Reformed church, was more indulgent to the Reformed people than Jan Harmdyk.

"It ain't the minister alone what's bothering him, I'm thinkin'," said Klaas. "He ain't feelin' very happy about this drain petition the farmers are tryin' to get through."

"Is that where the shoe pinches?" wondered the other.

"You just take my word for it. He broods about that, and what's more, it makes him see everything else out of shape; now Dominie Van Weelen, for one. He ain't your minister, but you know as well as I do that he's better by a big ways than Jan tries to make out. He's a little boyish yet, but that'll wear off."

"Say," said Jake Wagenaar, a sudden gleam of satisfaction lighting up his eyes, "did you ever see Dominie Van Weelen's arm *bare*."

"Is it big?"

"Oh, not so monstrous, but packed solid — like a sledge-hammer."

"Jan Harmdyk is goin' to get him into trouble some day with all his talk. I'd hate to see the boy get in wrong in his first charge."

"Why don't you speak to Jan about it? It's your place — you belong to his church."

"It would do more harm than good," said Klaas Thielman. "He's got no time for me; thinks I'm at the bottom of this whole drain question. He's told it about that I first planned the whole thing and got up the petition to the drain commissioner, and that if it had n't been for me the ditch would never be dug. Why, man, he don't speak to me."

"Is that right? What an awful *stijf-kop*. That drain ain't goin' to hurt his farm any more than the man in the moon."

"Everybody else has been sayin' the same thing, but he can't see it that way. He's afraid that it will hurt his pasture and that his cows will suffer durin' the hot spell."

"*Heden! heden!* I did n't know it was that what made him look so glum and cranky."

As a matter of fact, Jan Harmdyk had nothing to gain by the digging of the drain, and the improvement would naturally show in his tax assessment. But that was not the chief reason why he opposed the movement. He looked upon all drainage as a menace to his fields, believing that it would suck the water from below as the sun did from above. The argument that the comparatively high elevation of

his farm would preclude it from being affected by a drain ditch so much lower had no effect on him. He had made up his mind that his pasture sod was in danger, and no amount of argument by practical farmers or scientific experts could drive the idea out of his head. It was urged that many hundreds of acres of land belonging to his neighbors in the "clay bottoms" were practically useless because of the spring inundations, and that it was only during the hottest months in the summer time that they were entirely free from standing water. But Jan Harmdyk persisted in thinking himself wronged.

Arrived home from the field that evening he was still in an ugly mood; and Ezra, a heavily built and bullying son of nineteen, and little Johannes, called "baby" though he was ten years old, did not dare indulge freely in their usual boyish fun.

"There's a letter from Nell, pa," ventured Baby Johannes, when the milking was finished and Sarah Vissers, who kept house for the Harmdyks, had set the fried potatoes and cold ham on the table.

A letter from Nellie was an event in the Harmdyk household and was usually read out loud to the entire family. But tonight Jan Harmdyk was little in the mood for letters.

"Zoo?" he grunted, "what's that got to do with supper? Just eat and the letter will keep."

The family ate their meal in almost absolute silence. Each helped himself to as much of the food as his appetite called for, and when the supply of potatoes had given out Ezra silently, but with a look of com-

mand, handed the empty dish to Sarah to refill it from the frying-pan on the back of the kitchen stove.

The girl was about eighteen and pretty. She was possessed of a certain degree of beauty of the voluptuous type rather uncommon among the Holland girls of Harlem. She wore a loose "wrapper," and Ezra grinned mockingly as he looked after the retreating figure of the pretty young house-keeper.

"Ezra," said Jan Harmdyk reprovingly, and the boy's face immediately assumed an expression of deepest gloom.

Finally wiping the grease off his lips with the sleeve of his "jacket," Jan looked at Sarah reproachfully because she had not yet finished her supper. The girl had been kept busy most of the time ministering to the wants of the others. Since she was more dainty than the men, it was natural that she should require a longer time to finish her meal than they.

"Come, come, Sarah," said Jan impatiently, "we've got to read."

Cowed by reason of the unusual gloom that had prevailed during the meal Sarah could not hold out against the evident displeasure of her employer, and she laid down her fork, pretending to be through.

"Can you never learn not to be wasteful?" grunted Jan. "There you have your plate heaped full of potatoes and don't eat 'em. Your eyes are always bigger than your stomach."

The girl said nothing, and although she felt like bursting out in tears, she gave an hysterical little laugh, such as sometimes escapes a person at a funeral.

Her state of mind was such that she was not responsible for her actions, but Jan, with brutal masculine stupidity, was all unconscious of a tragedy unfolding itself in his household. He gave the girl a look that froze the smile on her lips. Opening the big Bible, its covers stained and spotted with grease from the oil-cloth table covering, he laboriously waded through the genealogy of the Kings of Israel that happened to be the subject matter of the chapter due to be read. A long combination prayer and pæan of thanksgiving followed before the family arose and the meal was over.

"Pa," ventured Baby Johannes once more when Sarah had finished washing the dishes and had placed the kerosene lamp with its much besmoked chimney on the kitchen table, "here's the letter from Nell."

"Well, then, read it," came in a tone of command.

Eagerly opening the envelope the boy read the letter from his sister, often stopping to spell out words or to appeal to Sarah for the correct pronunciation of those he was not familiar with.

There was very little sentiment or tenderness in the letter, except in the postscript in which she enjoined her father to take good care of Baby Johannes, and to be sure that Sarah keep his underclothes well mended.

"Why don't she come home herself and do it?" growled Jan Harmdyk. "Here I'm paying out a dollar and a half a week for hired help and have a daughter of my own doing nothing but goin' to such a college."

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"And learnin' more bad than good," ventured Ezra, glad to break the long silence. "I heard her and that girl she brought over here last Christmas talkin', and it was something scandalous, I'm thinkin'."

Baby Johannes looked daggers at his big brother. Nellie was the apple of the little boy's eye, and even now, after she had been at school for nearly four years, he sometimes cried a little after a letter from her had recalled to his mind the time when she was a mother to him. These tears, however, were always shed after he had gone to bed and was out of reach of his stern father.

"*Ja*, it 's awful," moralized Jan Harmdyk, "when a father can't control his own daughter. Here she 's carryin' on and learnin' all kinds of vanities that will only make her unfit to be the wife of a Christian farmer, and I can't do nothing to it. By and by she 'll be marryin' one of them English fellers and I'll have to be ashamed of my own daughter. Ain't that so?" he suddenly addressed Sarah on whose face he had surprised a look of skepticism.

"Yes, yes," said the poor girl, crushed by the sudden pugnacious address of the farmer and the stern look that accompanied it. But in her heart she knew that she lied; that she was so far from agreeing with Jan Harmdyk's sentiments that instead of objecting to a non-Dutch husband she herself would have gladly given her hand to a Mexican or a Frenchman or any other unthinkable unbeliever. The days were speeding all too swiftly for the girl,

and she often almost went into hysterics after letting her mind wander for a moment from her immediate tasks.

Jan Harmdyk was bitter all evening against education in general and against the fact that a daughter of his was attending "such a college." When finally the lights were out and he lay looking into the darkness and thinking bitterly about the coming of the drain, the natural reaction came. The face of his dead wife obtruded itself upon his imagination, and the scenes of the past came crowding back into his memory.

The thoughts of the long ago softened the man's heart, and doubtless the silent prayer that he sent up as he lay staring into the darkness was expiation sufficient for many a long-winded and wordy petition that he had uttered in public. Doubtless also these periods of reaction, when his heart was softened by the tender influence of a memory, weighed heavily in the balance against the bigotry and intolerance of his sterner hours.



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Unlike most of the women of her set Ezra's mother had indulgently tolerated this invasion of the English language into the very prayers of her children. Jan

Harmdyk had strenuously objected on the few times that he had overheard the childish lisings of spiritual aspirations; but the smile of the patient mother had showed the little boys that surely it could not be as wrong as their father tried to make it appear. The boys did not understand that there was an unbridgeable gulf between father and mother. They could not understand it then; they were too small — Ezra only fourteen and Baby Johannes but five. But Nellie understood something of the tragedy of her mother's life; and she had helped her as best she could to bear the burden. Later when her mother was gone, she often reproached herself that her college course had interfered with the training of the boys left in her care. She saw all too clearly that in the case of Ezra at least the strength of will of the father was inevitably breaking down, during the dangerous years of youth, the barriers of spiritual gentleness that his mother had tried to throw up for him.

The tragedy of this man and this woman was all the more pathetic perhaps because Jan loved the woman he had married, although he did it in his own rude way. He was capable of passion, but seldom, after the first warmth of the early days of marriage, had his wife suspected that he looked upon their union as anything more than an arrangement of convenience and profit. He had come to her in her little village in the Netherlands when she had already passed the age which in those days marked the beginning of spinsterhood. He was young then and there was

something of the dash about him which very positive natures often have. His face had not had time to become marred by the suggestion of flint that the later years brought, and in those days he had looked *clean*. A daughter of a respected family — a family that stood for the best there was in the life of the tiny Dutch village — she had seen the gradual but inevitable approach of the cavalier from the New World with many misgivings. But the very fact that he had come from the New World, though born in the Netherlands like herself, had cast about him something of a distinction and had appealed to the touch of romanticism in her nature.

True, he was a farmer; and secretly she had sometimes confessed to herself that the reason why she had not been saved from spinsterhood earlier, was that in the days of her younger eligibility she had looked as high as the ministry. But then, farming in America was different, he enthusiastically assured her. Everything was on a big scale there and farming there was a business. America was the land of opportunity where the farmer was the peer of the minister and of the doctor; where he was really the backbone of the nation and where he was respected as such.

Later in her American home came regret and heart-ache. It came very soon after the inevitable step had been taken; but the young bride quietly took up the burden of her mistake and Jan did not find out that anything was wrong until his will clashed with hers.

It was a matter of money, of course. Had he

asked her at the time of the marriage or soon after that event for the two thousand dollars that her father had left her, she would gladly have placed the responsibility of the care of it on his shoulders. But he demanded it after she had seen her mistake. There was a new farm to be bought and Jan assumed as a matter of course that the two thousand dollars would be invested in this land. In fact, Jan had not been ignorant of her financial standing when he came to her village home as a suitor.

He could not understand why she should wish to keep this money intact and why it should not be invested in the new farm; and she could not tell him why. But after each controversy she would draw little Nellie to her and promise the child the opportunity in life which she never could have if the money were tied up beyond the mother's control. And as Ezra came and later Baby Johannes, Mrs. Harmdyk renewed her promises and each child made it easier for her stubbornly to refuse the constant and insistent demand on the part of Jan that the money be invested in land.

She saw Nellie grow into the gentleness and beauty of eighteen. The girl had been educated beyond the girls of her set by the mother and Mrs. Harmdyk had destined her for college. The mother sensed something of the freedom that an American education would give a girl, and her own bondage had caused her passionately to desire freedom for her daughter. Ezra she had brought to the utmost boundaries of boyhood and he stood on the very threshold of youth.



There was in him even in those tender years something of the aggressiveness and the dash which once she had admired in his father. But the tenderness and the care that had been his during the years which had brought him to the time of vague wonderings and stirrings that accompany the birth of new forces, had left their mark. He was not ashamed to kiss his mother good night, even though the other boys of his age and size would have thought it queer if they had known; but he did not understand that the "dangerous years" were upon him. His mother knew, and for that reason she would have liked to stay longer, and also for the sake of Baby Johannes. He seemed so tiny and helpless, and she saw much before him against which she would have liked to guard him.

But the Destroyer was upon her, and had it not been for her children she would have met him gladly.

"You will not let father talk you out of going to college?" she said to Nellie when the shadows began to close in upon her.

"No, no, dear, dear, mother," said the tearful girl.

Ezra, boy though he still was, put his arm manfully under the withered head while Nellie brought a glass of water to the sufferer's lips.

"You are getting so strong, Ezra," said the mother with a returning flicker of maternal pride in the vitality of her offspring; "you will be a man soon — a man very soon." She saw him taking his own place in the world and rising to the nobility that had once formed the stuff of her dreams.

The boy wept with no pretense at manhood. He understood something of what the shadows that were gathering in that room would mean to him in the coming years. But he did not understand that the years of change were upon him and that during those years he was to be built for the higher or the lower. He could not understand that something of the knowledge of this made the parting harder for the mother than it otherwise would have been.

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Later Jan also was there. Yes, yes, Nellie should go to college and he would take good care of Ezra and Baby Johannes. Heart-broken, he would have assented to anything the dying woman might have proposed. In after years these promises to the woman who lay buried in the ragged little Harlem churchyard remained sacred to the stern farmer; but it never occurred to him that his yielding grudgingly to Nellie's going was only half-hearted loyalty, and that the mother might not have thought the rule of the iron hand over Ezra and Baby Johannes was what his promise of "being good to them" had meant to her.

Nor did Ezra respond readily to the rule of the iron hand. With Nellie at college and Baby Johannes still too small to come seriously within the pale of parental discipline, the brunt of Jan

Harmdyk's theories on the proper training of children fell on Ezra. The boy was at the beginning of his life of dreams; the stirrings of incipient manhood were in his veins, and in the early spring he began to understand subconsciously, elementally, something of the meaning of mating birds. The inevitable processes of nature were beginning to differentiate him and to place him in the class that was to be the father of the next generation. He was in the period of greatest susceptibility to outside influences, when the little brain was being marked by millions of paths — paths that were never to be erased. In these years his eyes would seek the heights, or the very manhood, that was beginning to assert itself in every cell of his body, would lead his steps to the depths. And the pity of it was that he did not know it and his father had forgotten it.

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"Come, Ezra, to bed; tomorrow you've got to get up early. Nothing good comes of this stayin' up so late," and the boy would sullenly obey. His mood would grow bitter when he heard from a distance the other boys of the neighborhood splashing in the river enjoying their evening swim. After mysterious conferences with these same boys Ezra delighted Jan one evening by voluntarily offering to go to bed much earlier than the usual time.

"I'm learnin' him," said the father to himself with satisfaction. But it was not hard for Ezra to climb through the window on to the kitchen roof and thence to the ground. A few minutes later he was with the other boys in the river.

This of course, eventually brought punishment and punishment of a kind that would have effectually cowed a less aggressive lad than Ezra. But in him it only served to provide motive force for new adventures. Moreover, it awakened in him and called into active life the incentives to brutality that might have lain dormant or that might have naturally developed into the strength of manhood.

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"Yes, yes," said the poor girl, crushed by the sudden pugnacious address of the farmer and the stern look that accompanied it. But in her heart she knew that she lied; that she was so far from agreeing with Jan Harmdyk's sentiments that instead of objecting to a non-Dutch husband she herself would have gladly given her hand to a Mexican or a Frenchman or any other unthinkable unbeliever. The days were speeding all too swiftly for the girl,

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The thoughts of the long ago softened the man's heart, and doubtless the silent prayer that he sent up as he lay staring into the darkness was expiation sufficient for many a long-winded and wordy petition that he had uttered in public. Doubtless also these periods of reaction, when his heart was softened by the tender influence of a memory, weighed heavily in the balance against the bigotry and intolerance of his sterner hours.

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in the boy's veins. "That is the only reason why he can thrash me. It is up to me to become strong since strength seems to give so great an advantage"—this unconsciously by the very law of his being. Consciously he determined that some day his father would no longer whip him. But the unconscious evil tendency that the father's example of brutality caused to flash through every fiber of his body left its inevitable mark and grew with inevitable accretion.

He was weaker and smaller than his father — thus again sang his wild blood. But Baby Johannes was smaller and weaker than he. If it was the law of the world that the stronger should bend the weaker to his will then why not obey this law? And poor Baby Johannes, delicate from infancy, gradually learned to feel the weight of Jan Harmdyk's moods through Ezra. Mere brutality is seldom unaccompanied by cruelty, and as Ezra's nature hardened it gradually also lost much of the gentleness which had incited him to lift the withered head of his dying mother with infinite tenderness so that she might drink a cup of cold water. He came to a stage where he found infinite delight in taking a handful of snow in the early winter morning and rubbing it on the bare breast of his sleeping brother. The fear of detection by his father added zest to such exploits; but chance of detection was really slight because he had taken delight in exercising his will in the intimidation of Baby Johannes to such an extent that the latter dared not make complaint.

Twice every Sunday both Ezra and Baby Johannes

were compelled to listen to a long sermon, and an hour had to be spent in Sunday School. Then there was interminable reading of the Bible at meals and prayers that taxed Ezra's patience to such an extent that often he surreptitiously put a piece of meat or cheese in his mouth and sucked on it while his father told the Giver of all perfect gifts the detailed histories of various members of the community and of various organizations in which the petitioner happened to be interested. Every evening the boy had to spend a goodly share of his time, time which was his by right of his youth for play, in "learning questions" — committing to memory answers to questions in the Heidelberg catechism of which he understood hardly a sentence.

But while away from direct parental control and while mingling with the other youth of the community he learned to say "damn" with a good deal of gusto. And various other expletives were added to his vocabulary, though never used in the presence of his father. He also learned to leer knowingly when the little country girls of the neighborhood passed into the church as the boys stood about the entry waiting for "catechism to open." The stirrings of approaching manhood in his blood would not be denied, and Ezra soon learned the standard "stories" of the neighborhood and each addition to his stock of "good ones" made him a more entertaining companion to his friends. There was nothing fine in his life that could do battle with the beast in him except the memory of his mother, and that was in the far shadows of

the past. The long sermons and prayers that he was compelled to listen to but which his very youth barred him from joining in, were wholly ineffectual.

Jan Harmdyk was blind to the transformation in his son. He had always been blind to the possibilities in the boy, and now that these hopes of the far-seeing mother were being blasted the father could not be expected to see the ruin. The evil that he did see was easily explained by doctrines of original sin and other kindred theories.

But each vacation when she came home from college Nellie saw the work of deterioration and the coarsening of the fiber of the boy. She wept sometimes in impotent anguish and then she would visit the grave of the mother to dedicate herself anew to the work of guiding her brother as much as opportunity permitted. To Baby Johannes she gave her love with complete abandon. Ezra could not help but arouse repugnance, and in him she could only love a memory.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BUILDING OF THE CANOE

**D**OMINIE Van Weelen was building his canoe in the little barn on the premises, and Mrs. Wachs watched the progress of the work with many misgivings. She had not fully reconciled herself to it when Mrs. Hendrick Slotman came to call on her, carrying in her spacious market basket two dozen fresh eggs and a fat turkey, dressed, as an offering to the pastor. Few of Dominie Van Weelen's parishioners ever made an empty handed call at the parsonage. It was because of this practice that the minister was enabled to build his canoe sooner than he had expected. During the first few weeks of his pastorate his self-respect had prompted him to discourage the practice. But a minister, especially one as human as Dominie Van Weelen, cannot always go against the grain, and he was compelled to yield to the custom with as good a grace as he could muster. His orthodoxy might have been questioned, he feared, if he had discouraged his parishioners' habit of supplying his table with the choice delicacies of the farm.

"Where is Dominie?" was one of the visitor's first questions, after she had comfortably seated herself in

the neat little kitchen of the parsonage. She carefully picked off a blade of dead grass that clung to the spotless apron which she had put on when starting out on her call, and looked inquiringly about the room.

"In the barn," answered Mrs. Wachs vaguely, seemingly with a view of shielding the minister. As his house-keeper she felt a personal responsibility for his conduct; she was instinctively disposed to guard his reputation—until the temptation to air views that had been bred in the bone of her became too strong.

They talked of other things. Was Mrs. Wachs' wash a large one, and were Dominie's shirts hard to do? Did he pray so beautiful at meals as in church? No, Mrs. Wachs did not believe he was engaged to a girl out East; at least, the only letters he ever received from there in a woman's hand were from his mother, she was quite sure. Besides, Dominie was not that kind. He told her a great many things and would most certainly have confided in her in regard to so important a matter! No, she expected to remain as his house-keeper for a good long time to come.

"Dominie still in the barn?" asked the visitor finally, becoming fidgety. The question implied that a minister, accustomed to the holy sanctuary of a study, would not condescend to step into so prosaic a place as the barn, except when it was entirely unavoidable.

"Ja, he's makin' such a canoe," said his house-

keeper shame-facedly. It was like a reflection on her own honor.

"A canoe?" was the mystified question.

"Ja, such a rowboat — you know — what the Indians use."

"A rowboat? Dominie? — Well, *verbazend!*"

"Ja, ja, ja," Mrs. Wachs shook her head so as not to seem to condone the unheard-of proceeding too much.

"When does he get time to write his sermons?" asked the other. "He preaches just beautiful. I was sayin' to Hendrick only last Sunday I had never heard the text, 'The truth shall make ye free,' explained so clear as Dominie Van Weelen did."

"Yes, he's a great preacher, and then he's real young yet."

"That's true," said the other, perfectly understanding the implication. "When he first came I says to Hendrick it did not look right to me — such a short letter, you know; but he kin preach just beautiful. But he don't look one bit like a minister. He's so big and strong and quick. Hendrick says he could do a day's work on the farm like the best of them, and I believe it."

"Yes, he's awful strong," admitted the minister's house-keeper.

"But what does he build that — that — well, that boat for? He ain't goin' to row in it himself?"

"He says yes," said the house-keeper weakly.

"And there he has such a bicycle already, and now a rowboat! *Och, och!* the poor boy will get the

people against him, and him what kin preach so beautiful!"

"He says he wants to learn the boys to row and to play ball like them dudes in the city." In spite of her loyalty to the minister Mrs. Wachs could not resist the temptation of making her neighbor's wonder grow a little more by telling of his peculiarities.

"*Heden! heden!* and that for a minister! It don't look right. If a Reformed minister did that it would be bad enough, but to think that one of our church should be of that kind!"

"Not that he neglects catechism or his sermons for it; you know that," argued Mrs. Wachs warmly, now once more on guard for the honor of the head of her household. "He sits up awful late — till ten o'clock sometimes, an' gets up early in the morning."

"*Ach, maar*; such base ball, I don't know," said Mrs. Slotman doubtfully.

"It's coffee time," said Mrs. Wachs a bit eagerly, glad to have an excuse for calling the minister to the house and letting him take up his own defense if he liked.

Dominie Van Weelen came under mental protest when the woman called. Deeply absorbed in the building of his canoe, he chafed under interruptions; and moreover, he did not take kindly to this institution his parishioners called "coffee time." Unlike them he did not happen to believe it was absolutely necessary for the human body to consume a cup of strong coffee immediately on getting up in the morning, two or three more at breakfast time, as

many more at nine o'clock in the forenoon "coffee time," another at dinner, some more at three o'clock in the afternoon — "coffee time" once more — one or two more at supper, and often another just before bed-time. Because of the visitor however he could not refuse the cup offered him by Mrs. Wachs.

Mrs. Slotman was plainly awed by the presence of the minister. His sleeves were rolled up; he was minus a collar; and there were little particles of sawdust clinging to his trousers. But she seemed to see a dignity about him that placed him above ordinary mortals. The good woman said very little, and Dominie Van Weelen, whose mind was occupied by the building of his canoe, also found that making talk did not come particularly easy. At home Mrs. Slotman employed a broad Dutch dialect, but in her short answers to the minister she tried to use the pure Holland tongue, and the result was rather ludicrous. Dominie Van Weelen could not repress a smile and he escaped to the barn as soon as he decently could, much to the secret amazement of Mrs. Slotman that he had not indulged in edifying talk or offered prayer.

"Their idea of a minister," said Dominie Van Weelen to himself, "is a man who wears 'Sunday clothes' seven days a week; who can offer long prayers whether there is occasion for them or not, and who is content to chat pleasantly and piously with old ladies over the tea cups. If he lets himself get fat and flabby and practically useless as a man among men — that's all right. A minister has nothing to



do with the body; his work is to keep the soul in trim. He can smoke his lungs away and drink so much coffee that his liver turns yellow, but as long as his sermons and prayers are of the standard length he is a holy man. I wonder," he continued, stretching out his "sledge-hammer" arm, slightly cramped with the sawing of a long strip of board, "I wonder how they construe that beautiful idea about the body being the temple of the soul, a place for God's dwelling?"

"Even in a country charge," the wise Dr. Dawson had said; knowing Van Weelen's passion for the work of the slum, "you may find an opportunity for real work that you had little dreamed of."

That opportunity was now coming in great abundance every day. There was a dreariness in the faces of many of the boys and girls in his congregation that could not be entirely accounted for by the isolation of the country. They lacked much of the zest of childhood, which fact made a deep impression on Dominie Van Weelen, himself very much of a boy. His attempts at fostering the play instincts in them were not encouraged by his parishioners. They looked upon all games with suspicion; and when the new minister introduced base ball, boxing, and wrestling matches and various other sports, the young people applauded but the older members of the congregation gravely shook their heads and looked thoughtful. Their philosophy of life could be adequately described by the two words, "work" and "religion," and because of their fidelity to what they

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considered the stern realities of life, play had no part in their scheme of things.

Dominie Van Weelen was easily able to put his finger upon the exact spot where the weakness of their philosophy lay. The farmers themselves took an intense interest in their work, and that was where their recreation came in; they needed no additional stimulus. Their boys and girls however naturally looked upon the tasks as drudgery, and they were consequently without recreation at a time of life when it is most needed.

The minister tried to impress this fact upon Jan Harmdyk when the latter made a strenuous protest against Baby Johannes spending so much time on the river.

"Baby Johannes has the making of somebody in him," said the minister, thinking a little flattery would do no harm. "But he is a little delicate, and if you deprive him at this time of every pursuit that he can take an interest in, the result may be disastrous. The boy is only a baby." Dominie Van Weelen had been strangely attracted by the lad and his words were actuated by genuine feeling.

But flattery was lost on Jan Harmdyk. Unlike Wordsworth he held firmly to the belief that children are born in sin and that the devil has to be purged out of them by the most strenuous means. If the body was hurt in the process, that was of minor consideration as long as the soul was benefited.

"Never you mind about Baby Johannes bein' delicate," he said with little of the intense respect in

his voice that the people of Harlem usually employed toward their minister. "Work makes boys strong, and you can't tell me that it's any good to have them loafin' their time away with such roots and suchlike things. Ezra was the same when he was that old; but I kept him at work and see how strong he's gettin'.

There was no denying this statement, although Dominie Van Weelen might have called attention to the effect Jan's system of education had had upon that young man's intellectual and moral nature. He desisted however, feeling that the argument would be lost upon the farmer.

Meanwhile his canoe had been finished, and before long he knew all the bends and kinks in the river for several miles up. Having discovered an ideal swimming hole about two miles beyond the bridge, he was in the habit of paddling up to it and then, after undressing on the bank, diving into the cool clear water-depths.

As he sat in his study during the evening writing his sermons, the minister would sometimes sit back and fondly touch the callus in his hands that the handle of the paddle had left there. Usually at first he went up the river alone, but occasionally, when Jan Harmdyk was in a softened mood, Baby Johannes would sit opposite the minister in the canoe, fondly watching the face he had learned to look upon as, next to his sister Nellie's, the most beautiful on earth. Dominie Van Weelen taught the little boy his first strokes in swimming and built for him a

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swing-board from which, with fear and trembling, he learned to make a clean dive into the water.

"That boy is not going to die of tuberculosis if I can help it," said the minister to himself. "I suspect his mother died that way; and if not taken care of, he would have followed her in a very few years. Don't let us over-worry about his religion just yet. We'll save his body and shall win his soul too."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FEUD

**B**ABY JOHANNES was steering the canoe while the minister propelled it. His lank boy-arm soon wearied of the strain on the paddle, but he endured the pain without a murmur. Consistently and without pause the strong arms of the minister sent the light craft forward through the water with long, bold strokes. Baby Johannes had formed in his little heart a mighty ambition to grow up into a man like the minister, and he did not care to show the white feather at the commencement by confessing he was tired.

From the odd little twists in the course of the canoe however Dominie Van Weelen knew that the hand that was steering was unsteady and weak. Allowing the craft to drift aimlessly he rested the dripping blade upon its edge. The boy imitated him with an involuntary sigh of relief.

"Are you tired, Baby Johannes?" The term had become one of endearment with the minister.

"No, not very." The little ripples on the surface of the river chugged against the sides of the canoe, almost drowning out the low voice of the boy.

"Take in your paddle and lie down in the bottom of the canoe," directed the minister. "You

will have to rest a bit before taking your plunge and I can easily do the steering."

The boy complied eagerly, luxuriously stretching out his thin bare legs, deeply tanned by the sun up to the bottom edge of the abbreviated knickerbockers. Very gently Dominie Van Weelen resumed the long even strokes and the light canoe bounded forward through the water. Soon it grated on the gravel of the beach near the swimming hole.

"Hi, Baby Johannes, wake up."

The lad was on the bank before the sentence was finished; and before the minister had stepped out of the canoe the boy had undressed and was standing on the grass clothed only in a yard of sunshine.

It took Dominie Van Weelen some time to get out of his clothes and into his bathing suit. Baby Johannes was by this time half way across the river. Thanks to the minister's lessons, he had become a fairly good swimmer.

"Be careful, Baby Johannes; don't go too far." The warning was superfluous. Baby Johannes knew that Dominie Van Weelen knew that he could rescue him in any case.

After sporting about in the water for some time the two sat down to rest in the warm sand.

"Where do you sleep?" asked the minister abruptly.

"Upstairs," was the unsurprised answer.

"With Ezra?"

"Yes."

"That makes it harder." The boy did not know

what he was referring to, but he felt sure there must be sound reason for any remark the minister might make.

"Do you sleep with your window open?" asked Dominie Van Weelen after a pause.

"Ain't that funny," answered the boy, "Nellie asked the same thing the last time she wrote home."

"Just as I expected," muttered the older man to himself, "but he seems to have a fairly strong constitution that will respond to the right kind of treatment."

"We've got the window open in summer," answered the boy, "but Ezra would never let it open else."

"I'll speak to Ezra some time. Meantime you keep the window open every night till fall."

"But Ezra will never let me," said the boy hopelessly. He did not have the slightest conception why the window should be kept open in cold weather; but the minister had advised it, and he would as soon have questioned the direct command of an angel.

The snatching away of the little body of Baby Johannes from the hungry jaws of the tuberculosis germ was but a sample of Dominie Van Weelen's campaign for fresh air in Harlem. He had determined upon this course the first Sunday he preached in the little church, when in the middle of the sermon an old farmer suddenly arose from his pew.

Dominie Van Weelen was disconcerted, as a young minister might well be who is supposed to be on

trial. Was the man going to answer the theological argument he was engaged in? After a moment he decided the farmer looked too sleepy for that.

Moreover, the farmer did not seem disposed to say anything, and after a momentary pause of expectancy Dominie Van Weelen continued his sermon. It was not however without stammering a bit that the minister regained the even flow of his discourse. At the end of five minutes the farmer resumed his seat and nodded in evident satisfaction at the point the speaker was making. As the sermon progressed others arose to their feet for shorter or longer periods of time, and Dominie Van Weelen decided that it was some queer religious custom characteristic of Harlem.

"What do they get up on their feet for?" he asked Mrs. Wachs that noon.

"Well, *verbazend!* Don't you know that?"

"There are a great many things I don't know," was the modest answer, but the house-keeper was incredulous.

"They do that when they get sleepy," was the astonishing information. Dominie Van Weelen burst out into a hearty roar. No wonder his supposed antagonists in argument had looked sleepy.

"Such mountains do we make out of mole hills," he philosophized; but the remark was lost on Mrs. Wachs, who moreover was a bit scandalized that Dominie should laugh so heartily and that on Sunday noon!

"And then when they're fully awake they sit



down?" he resumed questioningly. "That seems a pretty good custom."

Immediately he decided to go the people one better. The spring weather was ideal but every window in the church was tightly closed. He had confidence enough in his own eloquence to believe that with fairly good ventilation the time honored custom of arising in the course of the sermon would become unnecessary. Consequently the following Sunday he asked the janitor to open the windows.

Wilm Koster was thunderstruck. He shifted his quid of "Rob Roy" from one cheek to the other in evident excitement. The congregation also sat in wide-eyed amazement.

Those windows had not been opened since the church was built, and the paint where the frame met the casing was uncracked. Two or three old ladies shivered at the suggestion and drew their shawls more closely about their shoulders.

Nobody made a move and the windows remained closed during that service at least. After the sermon Wilm Koster, who had meanwhile had time to recover from his surprise, made it his duty to impress upon the minister the preposterous nature of his request.

"The old people 'll catch cold," he objected.

The minister did not attempt to explain to him the real cause of a cold. Instead of wasting sweetness on the desert air he reiterated his wish that the windows be opened next Sunday.

"But they ain't never been opened," Wilm said

deferentially; he remembered that he was speaking to Dominie. But his tone was that of a man who sets it down as an unalterable fact that one cannot travel to the moon because it has never been done.

"I'll take all the blame," said Dominie Van Weelen finally, "and to protect you fully, I'll do the job myself."

Wilm did not reply, and there the matter rested until Saturday evening when Dominie Van Weelen deftly loosened the frames from their contact with the paint and threw the church open to the evening twilight.

This unheard-of procedure could not help but be the sole topic of conversation on Monday among the farmers who were digging the drain that had been authorized shortly before by the county drain commissioner on petition of the "clay bottom" farmers.

Dirk Stormzand had voiced the sentiment that these innovations of Dominie Van Weelen tended toward modernism. Dirk was famed in Harlem for his deep knowledge of Scripture, and consequently his fellow workers were convinced without further argument that modernism, whatever it might be, was a dangerous tendency.

Hendrick Slotman however, digging his spade into the sticky clay, attempted a mild defense of the minister.

"My boy says that Baby Johannes told him that Nellie Harmdyk said that in her college they have the windows open all the time. She says in the city churches they never have them shut."

"Just what I told you," was Dirk Stormzand's quick retort, "we are goin' to modernism just like them city churches, what have socials and them parties and fairs and bazars. Think of it, a fair in a church; and still they call themselves Christians!"

"Yes, modernism is the great evil we must fight against," averred Gysbert Vissers, relieved at last to catch the significance of the term.

"But Nellie Harmdyk is a mighty smart girl, and what she says goes a good ways," ventured Hendrick Slotman, not caring to meet the issue directly.

"That's true too," put in Gysbert Vissers; "ain't it wonderful how much she looks like her mother!"

"Well, even if it is all right (mind you, I ain't sayin' it is) but even if it is all right, Dominie Van Weelen had no right to do it on his own hook."

"That's the way I feel," seconded Gysbert Vissers.

"The thing for him to do was to call a special meetin' of the consistory and ask their permission."

"Right you are," declared Gysbert Vissers, as though he had been the one to first advance the argument.

"But he says, and Baby Johannes says so too to my boy, that with the windows open you won't get sleepy in church. Now, I say that's a good thing."

"Yes," said Vissers, "it ain't right to sleep durin' the sermon; how can you tell else if the minister's preachin' the truth or not, especially such a young minister; there are so many heresies nowadays. It ain't as if Father Brakel was standin' in the pulpit."

"You can leave that to me," declared Dirk Stormzand proudly, "you never saw me sleepin', yet I ain't missed church once for twenty-seven years. I know when they preach the truth and when they don't."

"No, we need n't be afraid as long as you are in church," gladly admitted Gysbert.

"And then this not gettin' sleepy," continued the theologian. "What has an open or a closed window to do with that, I'd like to know? I keep awake because I go to bed on time on Saturday nights and get my rest."

"But there are lots of them that do get sleepy," objected Hendrick Slotman, "see how many get up from their seats every Sunday."

"That's because they don't use the time for sleep that God gives them. There's a time for all things, says Solomon, a time to wake and a time to sleep."

"You can't go against the Bible, Hendrick," said Gysbert Vissers warningly.

Hendrick did not reply, but covered his discomfiture by busying himself with scraping the mud off his rubber boots.

Dirk Stormzand seized his opportunity to drive home his charge of the minister's tendency toward modernism. Although not at all antagonistic to Dominie Van Weelen, Dirk Stormzand had been caught in the current of his own argument. Having stated his thesis, as it were, he felt it incumbent upon himself to defend it.

"The minister don't smoke," he said impressively.

"That's right," said Gysbert Vissers wonderingly, "come to think of it, I never see him smoke yet."

"And what's more," continued Dirk, driving the damning evidence in support of his thesis home, "he's against smokin'."

"Is that so?" wondered Gysbert; "well, *verbazend!*"

"That's as bad as the Methodists," continued the theologian, "they are against smokin' too."

"Just exactly as bad," declared Gysbert.

"It's true," admitted Hendrick Slotman reluctantly, "all of our ministers was great smokers; but really, if a minister don't want to smoke, where's the harm come in? I can't see it."

"Can't see it, eh? That's just because you would let most anything pass, you're that good-natured. And you'd let our ministers get notions like them Methodists and Baptists and what not. I'll go against it as long as there is breath in my body."

"So will I," declared Gysbert Vissers warmly; "the young people of today are bad enough with all their vanities, and we can't let them yield to the *dwaalleer* of modernism like them Methodists and Baptists."

"But why is it wrong to be against smokin'?" persisted Hendrick, addressing Gysbert, who, in a panic, immediately busied himself with the mud on his boots.

Dirk Stormzand took up the cudgels in his place.

"Why is it wrong? Do you ask that, what reads *De Grondwet*? Don't you remember what Dominie

Hoogland said about that two years ago last August?"

Hendrick Slotman admitted a bit shamefacedly that he did not.

Dirk was simultaneously chewing a quid of "Rob Roy" and smoking a corncob pipe stuffed with the same brand. He spat into the dirty water of the drain before giving the eminent divine's point of view.

"A minister, his article says — I remember because I read it again when I heard Dominie Van Weelen was against smokin' — a minister should be like his people in every way he can. When he comes to their houses he must do as they do — eat what they eat — live as they live. That's why he must be a smoker. A pipe makes him feel more at home when he goes to visit them. And all the professors at our theological school smoke. Do you think they would do it if it was wrong?"

"I should say not," protested Gysbert Vissers vehemently.

The article Dirk Stormzand quoted was one that had been "writ sarcastick"; but a theologian like Dirk could not be expected to take into consideration anything so worldly as sarcasm.

"But what reason can he give?" asked Gysbert, now fully convinced that smoking was a holy institution, like a feast of unleavened bread, for instance, "what reason can Dominie give for bein' against smokin'."

Hendrick Slotman took up the argument eagerly.

"He says it ain't a clean habit. He says the body is a temple — you can't go against the Bible, Gysbert — and that we must keep this temple clean. He talked a long time about that last week when he was over to the house, and I tell you I felt pretty nasty in the mouth, what with me with a big chew in my cheek. I almost felt then like givin' it up, but it's no use tryin'; I've chewed and smoked since I was fourteen years old. But I promised my boy a twenty dollar gold piece if he don't smoke or chew till he's twenty one."

"A young boy should n't do it," declared Gysbert Vissers.

"That ain't got nothing to do with it," said Dirk Stormzand emphatically, feeling that his thesis might possibly be in danger of being swamped by side issues; "all them new notions lead to Methodism and modernism and such other heresies. That's something what no one can deny."

"There you're right," admitted Gysbert, but Hendrick had nothing to say on this theological assertion.

"Not that I'm against the minister," continued Dirk Stormzand. "He's a good preacher, and if he was not orthodox I'd be the first one to see it. He will get wiser on some things if he stays here some time."

"Yes," said Hendrick Slotman, glad at last to agree with his neighbor, "he showed good sense in not mixing up in this drain business."

A great deal of pressure had been brought to bear

on Dominie Van Weelen to make him interfere in that venture. Jan Harmdyk had tried to use him as a tool to "cause the camps of the wicked to be thrown into confusion," as he expressed it.

Coming to the parsonage one day when the plans for the drain were being made by the "clay bottom" farmers, Jan had laid the case before the minister. He reiterated the fact again and again that the drain would hurt his farm, that it would suck the water out of his pasture sod from below as the sun did from above, that it was an innovation that should not be tolerated, and that it was the minister's sworn duty to bring the others to their senses.

"Especially Klaas Thielman, and him a member of the consistory," concluded Jan. "The Bible says we must do good unto all men but especially them of the faith," he quoted more or less correctly. "How he calls that doin' good to another member of the consistory I can't see, and him the leader of the whole thing."

Dominie Van Weelen listened patiently to the farmer's argument.

"I'll walk over and hear what Klaas Thielman and the others have to say about it," he said simply.

"Well, but now, look-a-here; I tell you they're in the wrong. You need n't go and ask their opinion. They'll say anyway they're right."

"Well, they have a right to be heard."

"It's your duty, Dominie Van Weelen, to set these erring members right, and you will be doin' a great wrong as a minister before the Lord if you



let them talk you into thinkin' your duty ain't your duty."

"I am absolutely unprejudiced," said Dominie Van Weelen gently, "and I'll give the matter my careful attention. I should prefer to have you two fight it out in court in a businesslike way, but I'll do what I can as a peace-maker."

Jan Harmdyk walked away mumbling something about the "ministers these days bein' so easy talked over," but Dominie Van Weelen repressed the obvious retort for the sake of Baby Johannes. A little child was leading him, and for the child's sake he was willing to be indulgent to prejudice and even injustice. He did not want to see the opportunity taken away from him of helping the boy grow up as God intended he should.

Largely for that reason Dominie Van Weelen, gave the matter careful and even painstaking attention. He held a conference with Klaas Thielman and several of the other "clay bottom" farmers, and had them explain to him just why the drain was an absolute necessity. They pooh-poohed the argument that it would affect Jan Harmdyk's farm at all, declaring that the harm was all imaginary.

To leave no stone unturned the minister called on the drain commissioner who could have no ax to grind.

"My dear man," said that official, "that drain should have been dug twenty years ago."

When the minister reported the result of his investigations to Jan Harmdyk the latter only felt

confirmed in his opinion that "them young ministers nowadays are so easy talked over."

Dominie Van Weelen's efforts as a peace maker proved futile. The only terms on which Jan Harmdyk would consent to make peace was the abandonment of the drain project, and on this point his neighbors very naturally would not yield.

Then came days of wrangling and back-biting and dragging out of long forgotten closets still longer forgotten skeletons, and charges of uncharitableness and harsh words, and thinly veiled threats — in fact everything that is likely to harass the soul of one who holds the position of shepherd of the flock. The real issue was soon lost sight of — as real issues often are — and the neighborhood feud was developing by leaps and bounds into something very serious.

All this while the minister held aloof. The digging of the drain was begun and Jan Harmdyk was possessed by blue devils. Dominie Van Weelen had made his opinion clear to his elder, and in spite of the numerous side issues dragged in, which he did not understand nor cared to understand, he saw no reason for changing his mind on the subject.

But Jan's blue devils poured all their fury upon the innocent head of Baby Johannes. It was for the boy's sake rather than for any other reason, that Dominie Van Weelen decided to make one more attempt to conquer Jan's prejudices. He went to the farmhouse and in answer to his knock the door was opened by Nellie Harmdyk.

## CHAPTER IX

### BREAKING AWAY

**W**HEN Nellie Harmdyk left for college four years before Dominie Van Weelen came to Harlem she was, in the opinion of the Christian Reformed minister who then served the congregation, all that a modest maiden should be. He strongly disapproved of a college career for girls and held forth eloquently on the many pitfalls in the American institutions of learning. Having himself been educated in the Netherlands he considered himself very competent to speak of educational conditions in this country.

Jan Harmdyk seconded the minister in his disapproval; and, to tell the truth, the girl herself felt reluctant to leave home. She hankered for an education; but there was Baby Johannes, then hardly more than an infant. Because of the invalidism of her mother, Nellie had early developed the mothering instinct in relation to her little brother. But in the end the last wish of the dying woman won out, and Nellie went to college, though with many misgivings.

Not the least of her misgivings were due to the fact that in Junctionburg, the college town, there was no Christian Reformed church. It threw her into something of a panic. She would have to go to

the church of *hoi barbaroi* — perhaps the Baptist or Methodist or Congregationalist. It was not religious prejudice, but the same fear took possession of the girl that seizes a society belle suddenly called upon to live with people entirely alien to her set.

Many months of hard work followed when she tried to forget the little brother at home and the old time associations by delving deep where so many have delved before her. The professors, whose shadowy personalities had seemed enveloped in mists of wonder while she was living in little Harlem, declared her a brilliant student, and before the end of the first year she had more than made up for the rather imperfect intellectual training that the Harlem school afforded. And long before she had learned to look upon her instructors as more or less human, her pretty face had attracted young Professor Harry Matthewson who was doing his first year at the college as instructor in English. He praised her themes a great deal, more highly than they deserved; but Nellie was wise enough to estimate her work, if not at its true value, at least at a smaller value than the young professor seemed to put upon it.

There was no mental protest however. The woman in her was highly pleased by the subtle touch of flattery. Nellie Harmdyk was acquiring an education in more ways than one.

Curiously it was English in which she made her most brilliant success. It was a long time before the peculiar inversions that her childhood training

in the Dutch language had given her had been overcome, but in the literature she made rapid progress. Rockwood, the head of the department, took a personal interest in her work; she was to him like a convert to his religion.

"You should read, Miss Harmdyk, read everything you can lay your hands on. You have more to overcome than most of my students, but reading will do it. Sermons and novels and philosophy and science and sporting news in the papers — it does not make much difference what you read when it is done to attain a real command of language."

Sermons, Rockwood had said. There could be no harm in that as long as they were of the right kind; but she knew of none of her religion in the English language. But novels — there was the hitch. They were tabooed absolutely and unqualifiedly by the minister, and consequently by the people, at home. Had the minister been right, after all, when he spoke of the many pitfalls for young people at the American colleges and universities? Philosophy and science she could conscientiously read, she believed; but what had Rockwood meant by the sporting news in the papers? She did not know. It sounded rather wicked, however.

Nellie was far from being a prig. Instinctively she took a keen delight in the pleasant things of life; but along with the solid virtues that her early training had given her there were mental attitudes and points of view not so valuable, and to her they all seemed sterling. Later she learned that in this slow-

ness of hers in eradicating early impressions lay safety as well as possibility for retardation.

The master however had said to the disciple, "Read." To the girl, eager for mastery in her chosen field, it bore a faint resemblance to the command of that other Master to those other disciples, "Go forth."

She compromised on *Ben Hur*. Her minister, she knew, would have called it wicked; but the master had said, "Read." Soon the enthralling story gripped her and carried her along with it. The portrayal of the Christ was like a new spiritual experience to the serious-minded girl. Never had the somewhat harsh and uncompromising interpretation of the gospels by the ministers at home given her such an insight into the divine tenderness and the pitying love of this Son of Man. The character stimulated her emotion and the flow of the story was irresistible. At home the reading of the gospel story always had had the whip of duty behind it, and moreover there had always been connected with the various passages a suggestion of long-drawn-out answers in the Heidelberg catechism which as a child she had been compelled to commit to memory. She had never read a single one of the gospels as a human story, and she had never had the experience of the English infidel-statesman who read the Bible because "it was so interesting."

The last chapter of the book found her a great deal less conscience stricken than the first — a plain case of hardening conscience, her minister at home

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would have called it. Then came historical fiction. Surely it could not be wrong to acquire an intimate knowledge of history in this pleasing way. Moreover, the history of English literature that the class was studying made the eager girl's appetite keener every day, and for the first time in her life she lost consciousness of time and space in the volumes of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Meredith and Hardy. It was like Balboa with the Pacific suddenly bursting upon his view.

Every time she came to class Professor Matthewson found something new in the girl's ingenuousness. The average student in the college formed his literary opinions more or less at second hand. He inherited, as it were, a mass of tradition about the authors and their books; he admired Shakespeare and Scott and Dickens and the rest of them because it would square him with literary orthodoxy. Not so Nellie. Gifted with a natural intuition for what is worth while in literature, she was bound by no *credo*, and the comments she made — spontaneous utterances that would not be repressed — sometimes staggered the young instructor.

The fact must be confessed that he used a number of these utterances in a magazine article, and more than one critic pointed him out as startlingly original!

Gradually the voice of conscience in Nellie became weaker and weaker as the perusal of her favorite writers became more fascinating. Sporadic appeals came that sent her into the dumps for a day or

two, when her letters home became all the more tender in regard to the care of Baby Johannes. But these "inward warnings" slowly became less insistent toward the end of the first year, and finally one day the girl suddenly threw off the burden and drank fully and freely at the fountain of her delight. She faced the issue squarely: she was doing no wrong in enjoying the greatest thoughts of England's noblest writers.

And as the new joy of life grew upon her there slowly but surely sprang up in her heart a bitterness against those who had deprived her youth of a sweetness it might have known.

One June evening Harry Matthewson was accompanying her from the boarding house. The air was encouraging and the two, acting on an unspoken agreement, wandered into a country lane beyond the city limits. They strictly and safely talked shop.

"But why did you never read your authors at home?" he insisted.

It was hard to make him understand — this liberally educated youth — whose father's large library had been one of the delights of his boyhood. She finally succeeded by telling an incident from her own experience.

"We once had a minister whose daughter he and all of us considered very, very wicked. She was accused of reading novels! That, as I tried to make clear to you, was one of the deepest depths of depravity in a girl — all others were supposed to have sense enough not to touch the dangerous things. I



know now they were not intelligent enough to appreciate them," she added, a little bitterly. "Well, this girl was socially outlawed in our church until one day she repented and gave up the practice. To the delight of her parents she read Father Brakel (a Dutch theologian-preacher) early and late. Her father held her up before the other girls in the congregation as a shining example for them to follow, until one day, by an unlucky chance, it was discovered she had used the covers of the Brakel sermons to hide her ten cent paper-covered trash!"

Matthewson laughed out hilariously at the ruse, and the girl found the laugh contagious enough to join in heartily.

"Most of us were kept from reading fiction by other considerations than the command of a father. Novels meant damnation and eternal torture. Not that the commands of a father were lacking in the other cases — only the minister's daughter was a bit more courageous than the rest of us. She 'jumped the life to come,' as it were."

The professor could not help but smile with keen appreciation at the personal application of the girl's recently found phrase.

"If your minister heard that, he'd think you had wandered pretty far from the orthodox way."

Nellie flushed uneasily. Although she prided herself on her new-found freedom, the words still contained a sting.

The school year ended and Nellie went home for the summer. How different the complexion of the

little countryside of Harlem! The little church hidden in a clump of trees; only twelve pews in the entire building; a Round Oak stove the central point of interest in the room — not yet removed although it was June; no trained choir (the unwritten creed of the church forbade choirs); a squeaky little organ; the cheap carpet on the platform slightly faded and no carpet whatever in the aisles of the church — it was all unspeakably more distasteful than she had ever dreamed in her bitterest moments of revolt, and only nine months ago she had quitted it with a pang!

And then the little farmhouse she called home — eating in the kitchen from a table covered with an oil-cloth, and flies coming in unhindered, was a cruel hardship. Had it not been for Baby Johannes she could never have become reconciled to it. But she drew the puny little boy to her heart with almost a mother's fondness and covered the smudgy little face with passionate kisses. Protests were vain. The appeal for a screen-door was set down as a "stuck-up notion," and so was the attempt to put white table linen on the table. Jan Harmdyk would have felt uncomfortable in such surroundings, and he would not tolerate any change in his way of life.

The only bright spots in the girl's life during the summer were caused by an occasional letter from Professor Matthewson. They were simple little notes of encouragement such as would naturally come from a teacher who takes a deep interest in a pupil's progress, and Nellie had sense enough to take them in this spirit. But they aroused in her un-

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utterable longing for the beginning of the new school year, and also weariness with Harlem and all its people. She had never been very fond of her father, neither did she pretend to any special liking for him. It was only Baby Johannes who bound her to the place of her birth. She wept over him on leaving for the city and secretly vowed that some day she would take him away from the place she had so far outgrown.

The whirl of college life soon made her forget some of her bitterness. Nellie Harndyk, whose name all considered outlandish, was beginning to be a somebody at college. She was elected president of her literary society; she was treasurer of her class; the Intercollegiate Oratorical League honored her by naming her as one of its officers.

As the weeks passed by she was consulted and sought after and looked up to by fellow students, and was pointed out by an admiring coterie of semi-disciples to strangers who visited the campus; and as usual in such cases there were also some who pointed her out as one whose abilities were much overestimated by the crowd of people not as discerning as they themselves claimed to be.

All these little triumphs Nellie Harndyk won before the end of her Sophomore year at college, as much by a trick of personality, as by an originality of outlook that captured the interest of all she came in contact with.

And then society began to make its insistent claims. An earnest student, but endowed with a sym-

pathetic personality, she had to fight the battle between learning and society. The past called with a thousand insistent voices, and the dreams that the race has dreamed haunted her and lured her on. Life of the present in its myriad forms made strong demands and would not be denied. There was interest, absorbing interest, everywhere to this eager student, and to her society came with claims that to it seemed all important. She fondly planned to spend an evening with Thackeray. But Tommie or Heinie or Jeannette or Mildred came along and laughed at the very idea. There was to be a jolly little dinner, or a masquerade, or just the dearest musical comedy, or a card party that she could n't afford to miss; and yielding to a senseless fear of being considered a book-worm she sometimes went through an evening of amusement that she did not care for, simply because others could not understand how her idea of solid pleasure could be anything but quixotic.

"You must learn to go out more, dear," said Caroline Basset, the particular disciple of the Dutch girl and who had assumed the place of honor at her right hand.

"With your talents and gifts you could shine and put all the rest of us in the shade."

"But I can't find time for that kind of thing, Carrie."

"Oh, shucks, you think you can't, but how do all the rest of us do it? You're twice as bright as anyone and could easily get your stuff out."

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"That's one of your pleasant little delusions," smiled Nellie. "But I'm not made for those kind of things, Carrie. I'm awkward and dull at your so-called functions. I love a pleasant little chat with you and some of the others, because you're nice. But I'll confess to you that I'm afraid when I step into the charmed circle of your so-called society."

"That's because you've neglected it, dear" — the invariable answer to the plea of the Student; and perhaps a correct answer if it did not imply reproof of the Student's estimate of relative values.

The kind of fear Nellie meant was, however, different from anything Caroline could understand. There was a horror of dancing and card playing and gathering together except for religious or educational purposes bred in the bone of the Dutch girl that her disciple could not begin to grasp. Anathemas from the pulpit, from teachers, from the farmer-theologians whenever they arose to speak their minds, had been thundered at her and at all her little Dutch friends since babyhood, as though they were to be rescued as a brand from the burning — these simple folk who had never seen and who were never likely to see a card, or a dancing frock.

So when Nellie Harmdyk admitted she was afraid of society it was a very real fear — a fear of moral degradation. It was the instinctive attempt to live in a rarer air than the common butterfly.

But the call was repeated and reiterated; it became more insistent as the months went by and as the girl found favor more and more in the eyes of

the world. She became an asset to society, and her disciples vied with one another in persuading her to give distinction to their functions.

Caroline, the disciple on her right hand, was the first to succeed with a simple little affair where they were to "have an informal jolly time."

"You dear thing," said the effusive Caroline after having obtained the reluctant promise, "we'll have just the loveliest time, and I'm sure you'll come oftener to our little stunts when you're once started."

The artless girl proved a better judge of human nature than Nellie might have given her credit for. Instinctively of broad sympathies, Nellie gradually began to take an interest in the interests of her associates; and this interest deepened as the fears of childhood began to fall away from her.

Another summer of trial in narrow little antiquated Harlem followed, and again she returned with relief to college, and to the social life she had once feared. The breathless activities soothed her and served to deaden the ache that always filled her heart when Baby Johannes had to be left behind.

Then came little card parties — "devil cards" they were called in Harlem — and simple little dances — the very wiles of the devil, thundered the Harlem farmers — and pleasant gatherings of various kinds where an innocent though superficial wit flowed free and where the girl learned to find hours of genuine pleasure and relaxation.

Translating all of which into Harlem standards,

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she was a fallen woman against whom God had eternities ago fixed his decrees from which there is no escape.

"You don't expect to quit now?" asked Harry Matthewson in alarm.

The two were taking a walk into the woods on a beautiful June afternoon. Gradually as the years passed the intimacy between them had deepened, and Nellie's disciples were always sure of calling a flush to her cheeks when they coupled her name with that of the "English prof."

"I'm afraid, yes," was the answer, "that is, I mean I'm not going to sit idle and assume the 'get thee behind me, Satan' attitude that some graduates take on as soon as commencement days have passed. I have found something very real and very precious in school and I shall try to continue to develop. But the more systematic education, I fear, is out of the question."

"But what are your plans, if I may ask — as your instructor and adviser?" he queried mock-heroically.

"Back to the 'tall timber,' as the sporting page puts it," she smiled; but the tone of the words was bitter.

"But why don't you teach if you have n't — if you do not find it convenient to take a post-graduate course?"

"I know it seems like burying myself to go back to Harlem, but there are other elements entering in. There is Baby Johannes — you don't know him and

so you cannot understand. I have neglected him for four years and I appreciate more than ever what he is losing. But this does not interest you."

"Yes, yes, it does," he replied quickly, but the girl did not choose to continue the subject.

"It seems like going against all the traditions of the literature that I have studied here to speak this way about my home. But I can't help it that I am not like Goldsmith's Traveler who 'still had hopes to die at home at last.' Perhaps it is to my discredit, but the air there stifles me. I want to get back—back to the big world; although I suppose this college town is rather a little world, comparatively."

"Yes," said Matthewson, "it seemed a bit cramped when I taught my first class here; but a man gets used to many things. I have enjoyed my stay here more than I can ever express." There was something more in the man's voice as he spoke these words than mere interest in the place.

"Oh, I should love to go to the university," cried the girl. "That course you were telling me of in the Psychology of the Romantic Movement, for instance, I imagine must be wonderful; and then the library facilities and the faculty—themselves all authorities and writers of books—how I should love to see a man who had really written a successful, inspiring book!"

"They are but mortal like the rest of us," said the professor, wishing for the first time in his life for the distinction of authorship for other than



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literary reasons. The girl however took the statement with a smile of incredulity.

"*You* have really lived all your life," she answered, "and you can never understand. It seems wicked to hate one's childhood, but, oh, how I hate it! And the Dutch, the race that gave me my name, I loathe them!"

She looked down ashamed after this outburst. "I beg your pardon," she said softly; "again, this cannot interest you in the least."

Professor Matthewson protested that it did, but the girl tried to change the subject. She was very desirable, he reflected; and the fire in those eyes made them more attractive. The full young body, too, with its suggestion of health and feminine strength, made its appeal to the instructor. The birds in the trees about them were mating, and the air was full of their riotous love-song.

"By the way," said he trying to steer himself into safer channels, "how is that minister enjoying himself? the novel-denouncing one, you remember mentioning to me."

"Minister? Oh, he has left years ago. But there is another one now. I have not had the pleasure of seeing him. He is a recent arrival and, I hear, a recent graduate. He has no daughters to torment him with their natural depravity, but I fear the ground whereon he walketh is holy ground; or, if it is not, the rest of us over there will make it so." Again the bitterness that she could not keep out of her voice.

"Well, there is some hope in his being young," said Matthewson.

"Do not deceive yourself," was the answer in the same bitter tone, "it is especially at that age that the holiness is overdone. It is assumed that youth is the 'dangerous age,' and the young minister puts up, as it were, a bold front against the devil to get ahead of temptation. When they grow older some of them learn to show some indulgence to human frailty."

Matthewson laughed heartily at her vigorous way of expressing what she felt; but realizing the very real tragedy that caused the girl's bitterness, he said sympathetically,

"It does seem like a pity to go back there."

"Oh, I'll live through it some way." But the professor saw her turn her face away, to hide the emotion that the thought of return caused her.

A sudden impulse seized him to give the girl by his side all the sympathy that since time immemorial the young man has given the young woman in distress. To pour forth a tale of tenderness; to tell her of the true way of escape from the prison-house of her youth; to paint a picture of idyllic beauty that has been painted millions and millions of times since the world began, but that is ever the same; to plead finally his own loneliness when she should have left the campus — to take her in his arms (oh, the intoxicating prospect!) — and feel those rich, warm lips upon his — those lips that had so often haunted his day-dream when he was supposed to be working

on Freshmen themes; to taste for once the full, free draught of the glory of youth! But —

Ambition crowded into his path. A doctor's degree, a fellowship in the great university, fame as an authority — all this could come only by a slow growth, and the plant must be carefully tended. A home, yes, a home! The thought was alluring, but would not that be the end of his hopes in the other line? A man must weigh his actions carefully. Who was it said something about the loneliness of genius?

The impulse passed. Something broke the electric current that had for a moment existed between the man and the woman. The spontaneous yielding of the feminine in her a moment before to the masculine aggressiveness that his impulse prompted ebbed away and left her heart cold and hard.

"What a beautiful day it is," she said because she had to say something.

"Yes, very beautiful," he answered for the same reason.

## CHAPTER X

### "THE DUTCH OF IT"

**S**MALL talk was not among the accomplishments of Dominie Van Weelen any more than Nellie Harmdyk had been noted for it at college. His head was usually full of plans, half visionary, that he would like to put through; she was always racing with time trying to cover the voluminous works of Thackeray, Scott and several other favorites, and it was hard for both to come down to commonplace badinage.

The conversation lagged. After he had introduced himself and the girl on her part had made herself known to him, there seemed little to be said and both felt rather uncomfortable. She had led him into the parlor of the Harmdyk home, that sanctuary so seldom thrown open to the sunlight before the advent of Nellie from college. He sat in the bright plush chair like a little boy waiting to be punished.

"He's come to enquire into my spiritual condition," thought the girl, and straightway she resented the intrusion. A little devil of mischief taking possession of her, she determined to make the young divine's eyes bulge out in holy horror. For that reason she scrupulously avoided using any Dutch word in the conversation. Dominie Van Weelen very

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simply and very naturally spoke English without even a suggestion of the broad Dutch accent Nellie was ready to ridicule.

"I suppose you are about getting acquainted in Harlem?" she asked to tide over a gap in the conversation.

"Yes, I have learned to know all the people in my church — not a great task — and most of the other people of Harlem as well. You, I presume, will have to begin all over again."

"I don't think I'll make the effort." She watched for the look of sanctified protest but it failed to come.

"Looks rather small to you just now, does n't it?" was the unexpected answer.

"Yes, it's almost stifling."

Dominie Van Weelen instantly caught the bitterness of the tone that she could not suppress, and his almost subconscious study of the personality of Jan Harmdyk made it seem quite natural.

"'Man in himself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven,'" he said gently but half banteringly; "which is discouraging or comforting, depending on the individual."

"Who ever heard of a Christian Reformed minister in Harlem quoting Milton?" thought the girl.

"There's a good deal of talk about rising above one's environment that is all poppycock," she said deliberately choosing the inelegant expression in an effort to rub the fur the wrong way.

"Yes, there's a great deal of sentimentalizing

about it that the average man and woman takes for true gold. Poetry is responsible for many a social fallacy."

The remark was uttered so simply that it went over Nellie's head a bit.

"I love poetry," she said combatively, thinking the minister unquestionably did not and wishing to antagonize him.

"You are fortunate," was the unexpected answer; "loving poetry is something of a gift. They say a poet is born, not made. I believe this is largely true too of a reader of poetry."

The girl was staggered for a moment.

"But if a person is never allowed to read a line of it, even being born a reader of poetry could hardly be considered fortunate." Again the tone was bitter.

"In that case it's 'wasting sweetness on the desert air,'" quoted the minister lightly with a comprehending smile.

"He has a queer way of enquiring into the state of my soul," thought the girl, "but just wait, it will soon come; I've never yet known it to fail."

"I spent eighteen years of my life here and at that age I had never heard of Tennyson." She said it as though the crown of the martyr were her due.

"Rather hard on you," said he sympathetically, "but it might have been worse."

"Worse?" combatively.

"Yes, you were deprived of English, French and

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German literature, but you had at least the great Hebrew literature, the Bible."

"There you are," said the girl to herself, "I knew he'd come around to that."

"Yes," she answered contemptuously, "in *Dutch*."

"Naturally the beauties of the book are brought out most clearly in the original Hebrew and Greek, but most of us must be content with a translation."

The girl felt that he was laughing at her now, and rather unreasonably resented it.

"No, it is not the original Hebrew and Greek I was referring to; I am not enough of a classical scholar for that. What I mean is that the Dutch of my early days has left such a bad taste in my mouth that I don't care to read the Bible now that I've grown up."

"There's one straight from the shoulder," she said to herself, "now go ahead and preach your little sermon."

But Dominie Van Weelen was much too deeply interested in the personality of the girl before him to think of reproving her because she admitted she did not enjoy reading the Bible. Moreover, he knew enough of psychology to see that reproof in a case of this kind would not cure. It would be his business, he figured, to arouse her interest, otherwise the mere mechanical reading of the book would amount to very little.

Dominie Van Weelen dimly saw what forces and conditions had contributed toward the building up of Nellie Harmdyk's character. The stifling at-

mosphere that had surrounded her youth he could make a fairly correct guess at. How it had repressed her nature, how it had stifled the instincts toward the beauty in the world, how it had aroused mental and spiritual terror where there should have been exaltation — all this he dimly perceived. How finally, like a clod "groping blindly for light" she had "climbed to a soul in grass and flowers" — this he was quite sure of. The reaction which seemed very natural to him he felt would be only temporary.

"One of the funniest experiences I have had since I came here," he said pleasantly, ignoring the challenge in the girl's voice, "was when my housekeeper told me gravely there is after all only one Dutch God."

Nellie's laugh mingled merrily with the deeper merriment of the minister. Somehow he had disarmed her.

"And it is only four years ago," she said, "when I would have defended that doctrine more or less warmly."

"One can learn very much in a few years."

Was he laughing at her? She was not quite sure; it was said so simply and naturally that there was no chance for resentment.

"I suppose it was the Harlem dialect that was the only orthodox language during your youth."

"Yes, oh, how I hate it."

"That's where you were rather unfortunate. I learned to love the beautiful Dutch psalms when



hardly more than a boy. We are handicapped here because we have no pipe organ; but did you ever hear a large congregation sing the long-meter psalms in Dutch to the accompaniment of a large pipe organ? To me there is hardly anything in sacred music so sublime as that."

There was a fire in his eye and an enthusiasm in his voice that won the respect of Nellie Harmdyk. She had not the courage to say anything biting.

"Well," she said after a pause, "even if your old house-keeper is prejudiced, I feel about the Dutch language a good deal like that, only in another way. To me it is hard to understand how there can possibly be a *Dutch* God."

"That sentiment, if it should become general, would be likely to leave me minus a job—in Harlem at least," said the minister pleasantly; "so the prejudice of Mrs. Wachs may come in handy as a counter-irritant perhaps. But seriously, do you think there is anything in the phrase, 'that's the Dutch of it,' which I occasionally hear?"

"I most certainly do."

"Well, perhaps I did not make myself clear," he answered quickly, struck by her vehemence. "I recognize the fact that the Dutch have characteristics that distinguish them from other peoples, just as the cartoonists rightly give certain characteristics to the English resulting in the John Bull, and to the Americans represented by the benevolent Uncle Sam. But the phrase 'that's the Dutch of it' signifies something contemptuous."

"Just exactly," she snapped; "that is what I meant in the first place. To me 'the Dutch of it' means boorishness, stolidity, uncouthness."

"I am glad you are frank about it and are not restrained from speaking right out because I am a Hollander myself and make my living preaching in that language."

"I beg your pardon," she said in genuine concern that in spite of what he said his feelings had been hurt; "that fact never entered my head. I was — I was — well, merely discussing it as you would a dead language."

"That is exactly what I should like to do. No, you did not hurt my feelings in the least. Did you ever read *Bilderdijk*, *Ten Cate*, *Beets*, *De Genestet*, *Tollens* and a few of the other great names in the literature of the Netherlands?"

"No — no — I did not," answered the girl doubtfully.

"I meant merely," said the minister gently, "if you had it would seem inconceivable to me how you could call the language boorish. Have you ever made a close study of Shakespeare's sources?"

The girl was surprised, not so much because of the apparent irrelevancy of the question, but she asked herself: Who is this Dutch Christian Reformed minister who talks about the sources of Shakespeare?

"Again I have to plead ignorance," she said.

"Well, you may not know then that some of the plots are based on Dutch plays; or are supposed to be based on them, which is about as near to the truth

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as one can come in regard to the sources of any of the plays."

"I had never heard the statement made," she had to admit — she who prided herself on her attainments in English literature.

"And Milton's *Paradise Lost*, you may remember has many echoes of Jost Van Vondel's *Lucifer*."

"That's all new to me," she said meekly.

"At the university a few years ago Dr. Mantle bewailed the fact to this class in Shakespeare that he did not know Dutch; it was the only attainment, he said, that might make a scholar distinguished these days in studying Shakespeare's sources."

Nellie drew the evident conclusion from the statement which the minister had intended.

"Where I believe you make your mistake," he continued, "is in comparing peasants with the higher classes of society. The only Hollanders you seem to have come in contact with are these simple farmers. You must remember that a few years ago they were merely oppressed peasants in the Netherlands. Their intelligence you cannot fairly compare with that of the educated people you have met at college. That would be like laying it up against an Oklahoma Indian that he cannot speak Latin and knows nothing of Trigonometry. I know, there are a great many prejudices and pet notions native to this community, but the same thing could be said of most communities, American as well as Dutch. Besides, there are many qualities that weigh down the other side of the scale. There is a tenacity in the

people and a steadfastness of purpose that one cannot help but admire, even though it is sometimes shown in naive ways."

Nellie had no answer for this argument but she felt sure he would change his mind when he had learned to know Harlem better; he had not lived there all his life from babyhood.

Her suspicions of his spiritual designs upon her were suddenly reawakened when he said,

"I did not come here however to air my views on the Hollanders. I confess though the discussion has been very interesting."

Instead of changing the subject to the state of her soul however, he almost took her breath away by saying,

"That's the first piano I've seen in Harlem. It's a long time since I've heard piano music. Am I asking too much?" motioning to the instrument. His voice was wistful and the girl complied the more willingly because while she was playing there would be no opportunity to ask, "How is it with your soul?"

The music was interrupted by the entrance of Sarah Vissers with a tray bearing coffee cups and a huge pile of slices of cake on a plate. Nellie was visibly chagrined. She did not approve of the Dutch institution of "koffie drinken," and had tried to break Sarah of the habit. But however the latter might have stretched a point in Harlem etiquette to conform to the college girl's "notions," she would never have dreamed of applying Nellie's rule

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where the minister was concerned. Making the best of the situation Nellie asked Sarah in an undertone to return to the kitchen and serve the cake on individual plates.

Sarah complied grumbly.

"Looks like you're too stingy to let him have more than one piece," she mumbled to herself.

Nellie did not play gospel music when Dominie Van Weelen again suggested that she seat herself at the piano. Still with a view of stirring up the ire of the young minister, she reeled off the most frivolous "rag-time" she knew. But instead of seeming relieved at the entrance of Sarah, a slight shadow crossed his face at the interruption. He was starved for music and the mere sound of the instrument was exhilarating.

Sarah had the cake on individual plates but this time she had forgotten spoons. The fact is, back in the kitchen she had been in doubt which was proper, to use spoons or forks, and she had finally compromised on letting the guest use his fingers.

"Haw! Haw! fingers was made before forks," Ezra would have said had he been present.

A painful flush of embarrassment overspread Nellie's face. Feeling almost personally responsible for the lapse in manners, she asked Sarah a bit sharply to return to the kitchen for spoons.

The girl complied and returned to the parlor flushed and nervous. The minister regarded her sympathetically, which increased her agitation. He had paid little attention to her before this, and

noticed now for the first time something queer in her appearance. His glance returned to her repeatedly as she served them; to Sarah, self-conscious and irritable, it seemed almost like a stare.

Her uneasiness increased; her cheeks turned a deep red and ghastly white alternately, and the hands that served the minister and Nellie trembled visibly.

Suddenly she startled them by bursting into tears, and before the minister could prevent it she sank into a heap on the floor and sobbed in complete abandon.

Dominie Van Weelen was bending over the prostrate figure before Nellie realized fairly what had happened.

"Throw open the door," he said peremptorily; "she has fainted." Nellie obeyed him unquestioningly, and as the outside air streamed in Sarah regained consciousness.

But she could not answer Nellie's excited questions. Moreover the minister checked them with a wave of the hand.

"She is not responsible for what she does," he said simply.

Taking the fallen girl tenderly up in his arms, he carried her to a sofa in an adjoining room and drew the shades. Nellie could not help but be struck, in spite of her agitation, by the combination of tenderness and splendid strength he displayed, and there dawned in her heart a new respect for this man who had shown himself so baffling during the conversation a few moments before. The fuss she

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had made about the plates and spoons now seemed like the act of a woman of narrow sympathies in the face of this tragedy that was overshadowing the life of a sister.

A certain maidenly delicacy had hitherto prevented Nellie from seeking Sarah's confidence in her trouble; but Dominie Van Weelen's straightforward way of coping with the situation shamed her into leaving the room and offering her aid to the unfortunate girl.

Left alone the minister went to the barn where Jan Harmdyk was repairing a manger for his calves. Catching sight of the stern face of the farmer he remembered that he had completely forgotten about the purpose of his visit. The talk with Nellie had driven the dispute about the drain entirely out of his head.

"But what does the miserable ditch amount to compared with a tragedy of this kind?" he thought. "The ditch can wait."

But he could not make Jan Harmdyk understand. The average Harlem farmer was not in the habit of speaking about the facts of the origin of life in terms characterized by extreme delicacy, and Jan Harmdyk was more brusque than most of his neighbors. The minister's attempt at telling him what was happening in his household, without using the definite terms that somehow would not be uttered, was a failure and the farmer stood mystified.

"I guess it's some new notion of his," he thought, "like that fool fresh air business in church, but what

Sarah's got to do with it is what I'd like to know. Dominie Van Weelen is a little rattle-brained, I guess."

Forced to use direct terms Dominie Van Weelen finally made Jan Harmdyk understand. It was characteristic of the farmer to have spent his days and nights protesting against an imaginary evil while failing to see the tragedy of far deeper meaning working itself out under his very eyes.

"And that in my house! Who could have believed it?"

"That is not the question," said the minister sharply, "the harm has been done, and the problem is how to take the best possible care of the poor girl."

"She ain't goin' to stay in my house; that I'll tell you right now," snapped Jan Harmdyk.

"That's unchristian," said Dominie Van Weelen sternly.

"What right have you got to say that what I do is unchristian?" retorted the other.

It was the first open sign of revolt.

"The girl has to be taken care of, and if she is not allowed to stay in your family her father will have to take charge of her."

"If he wants a harlot on his hands that's his business," said Jan, "but if she was my girl I'd tell her to follow the path she has marked out, that's what I'd do."

"And if you did that you could n't belong to a church of which I am pastor." Dominie Van Wee-



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len was thoroughly angry, but regretted the words immediately; they were so entirely unnecessary.

"Whoever takes charge of her," he said more gently, "she must be treated with the tenderness that is due a woman in her state. Whatever her short comings may be, her child has a right to be well born, and whoever deprives it of this right is a criminal."

This was new doctrine to Jan Harmdyk, and mentally he applied to the minister the Dutch equivalent for the slang word "mixed."

"I gave her father ten bushels of seed corn," he said deliberately, "for which she promised to work till the middle of July, and until the middle of July she's goin' to work or I'll know the reason why."

"So there will be no danger of her contaminating your home while you have work coming, but after that she will?" The minister was thoroughly out of patience with his elder and he could not help the sneer.

"I ain't goin' to be robbed," was Jan's all-sufficient answer; "they're tryin' to do that with the drain, but they can't do it all the time."

Dominie Van Weelen suspected that Jan alluded to the drain to change the subject and learn what the minister's ideas were on the digging of the ditch. Here was an opening to say what he had come to the farm to say. But he knew his limitations; he felt he would be a poor peace-maker under present circumstances.

No argument or appeal could soften the farmer

however toward Sarah Vissers, and the minister finally desisted. He did not believe Jan. Harmdyk would carry out his threats.

"That's the Dutch of it with a vengeance," he said as he left the farm.

## CHAPTER XI

### SEEKING THE LOST

**I**N spite of Dominie Van Weelen's protests, Sarah Vissers was compelled to "work out" the ten bushels of seed-corn, and the minister never again attempted to repeat his visit to Jan Harmdyk to reconcile him with his neighbors. Events now came upon him so thick and fast that they drove the hotly disputed drain out of his mind and made him forget there was other work in the congregation aside from the raising of a fallen sister.

But even though Jan Harmdyk held Sarah to her bond, Dominie Van Weelen found means of making her tasks easier. Quite simply and directly he represented to Nellie that in view of the circumstances it would be her duty to shield the girl as much as possible against the thoughtless cruelty of her father; and Nellie responded with an alacrity that did much toward eradicating the first impression he had formed of her, an impression that was not without disfavor.

It was not hard for the minister to speak to Nellie on the delicate subject. When discussing it with Jan Harmdyk the essentially virgin-minded minister felt embarrassed and ill at ease; in discussing it with his daughter it was merely the consideration of a

social fact — the recognition of certain needs that must be met. Her quick intuition responded to his, and a suggestion of what was to be done was all that was required to make the girl jump eagerly at the bit of social service which the occasion demanded. Her protection of Sarah was not wholly unselfish; it gave her something to do so that the hours did not drag along in their usual flat monotony.

“I suppose the conventions of my calling should compel me to reprove Nellie Harmdyk,” mused the minister walking home from the farm after his talk with her, “for not liking to read the Bible and for uttering all the heresies she did during our talk. Well, perhaps I’m timid along this line — but — but — I don’t see anything to be gained, and why should n’t I go after the results as best I know how? Anyway, there would be no sense in antagonizing her just at the moment when she is to help me.”

The opportunity for reproof, thus lost, never came again. A routine-bounded brother in the cloth might have declared that the young minister had allowed himself to be led into the temptation of shirking his evident duty. To all such indictments however Dominie Van Weelen would have made the answer that by this means he had achieved a definite result. Fired by the task at hand he did not stop to worry about the fine point of ethics at issue.

Nellie prepared the meals, swept the floors, made the beds, did the milking, and performed a number of other menial tasks that usually fell to the lot of Sarah Vissers. The housework was easy enough;

moreover it was not hard to hide this charitable deception from her father. Sarah merely waited on table and for all Jan Harmdyk knew she had pared the potatoes which filled the frying-pan, while Nellie "fooled away her time with that pianner and such other nonsense."

But the milking and the other chores constituted a greater problem. These tasks, once so familiar, were a great tax on the college girl's muscles, once labor hardened but now tender and soft; and the distastefulness of the work made it doubly difficult. About Hardy's Tess milking her cows there was a kind of mystic glorification that Nellie could not apply to herself engaged in the same distasteful occupation. She naturally shrank from filth, and the flies and dirt in the cow-yard were a constant torture. Once it had all been a matter of course with her, but now this was changed.

And the awful thought would not down: What would Professor Matthewson think if he knew about such environment and work?

"Why am I doing this anyway?" she asked herself as the milk streamed into the pail. Her wrists were tired and sore with the strain of the work, as they always are of the beginner in the gentle art of milking. The heat coming from the cow's body was exceedingly disagreeable.

"Just because a Christian Reformed minister whom I had despised *a priori* as a narrow bigot, refrained from asking, 'How is it with thy soul?' A pretty good reason, Nellie Harmdyk, you who a few

weeks ago were so anxious to take a course in the Psychology of the Romantic Movement."

She smiled a little bitterly, looking the while at the cow brushing a pestering fly off her neck by a vicious sweep with her broad tongue. Almost at the same moment the tail was switched across Nellie's face stinging the tender skin like needle points. Tears of pain came into the girl's eyes; but the next moment she smiled as the thought obtruded itself how the poets of the very Romantic Movement she wished to study used to idealize the milk-maid in their verses.

"And many of them never saw a cow outside of a picture book," she said as she good-humoredly resumed the milking.

"You must n't talk when you milk, Sarah. 'Tain't good for the cows," said Jan Harmdyk coming up to the fence.

"I was merely telling the cow about the Psychology of the Romantic Movement," answered Nellie wickedly. "Such instruction cannot help but be good for a lady of her manners."

"*Heden! Heden!* Nellie, you milkin' again!" exclaimed Jan surprised but hugely pleased that his daughter was making herself useful once more after doing practically nothing for two whole weeks since coming back from school. A smile of pleasure lighted up his stern face, and by a trick of nodding his head he rubbed his scrubby beard through the arched palm of his hand, like a cat arching its back over the hand of its mistress.

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"What's Sarah doin'?" he asked presently with a hint of suspicion in his voice.

"She's doing the house work while I do the milking. I like this better than work indoors." Nellie lied without compunction.

"That's fine," her father said for once in a gentle tone; "I see book learnin' ain't spoiled you for real work. When Sarah's time is up I guess we can manage without her."

Nellie did not answer; there would be time enough to undeceive him when the fifteenth of July should come.

When that day came Sarah was willing to remain in the Harmdyk household. She had never told Nellie or any member of the family that her reception at home would be a very cold one. When three weeks before she had walked over to her father's farm for a short visit there had been a scene in which Gysbert Vissers taxed her with bringing shame to the unspotted record of the family.

"I never thought," he complained, "that a daughter of mine would make me ashamed of her — me what always learned you to be religious and go to church like a decent girl. That's what a father gets for workin' to bring up his child in the fear of the Lord."

Tears were the girl's only answer and she sneaked back to the Harmdyk home as soon as there was a cessation in her father's harangue.

"Stay here?" blurted out Jan Harmdyk when Sarah timidly suggested to him that she was willing

to continue in his service, "what would I keep you here for? Nellie can easy do the milkin' and the rest of the work. Do you think I'm goin' to pay out a dollar and a half for nothing. I've done that long enough already."

Sarah said eagerly she was willing to stay for her keep.

"For your keep, eh? For your keep! No, siree! I keep no harlots in my house that don't obey the word of God. And your father one of them what's takin' the bread out of my mouth with that there drain they're diggin'. No, siree! Let him take care of his own misguided children. I wash my hands clean of it. Gysbert Vissers is findin' out that the Lord can punish in more ways than one them what goes against his will, and Klaas Thielman and the others will also find it out sooner or later."

He left Sarah sobbing bitterly, sitting on a sack of bran in the barn where she had gone to make her appeal. The inexorable lines in Jan's face were indication sufficient that no amount of weeping could change his purpose.

Nellie found the girl a few minutes later still sitting in the same attitude, her breast heaving with half-suppressed sobs.

"Are n't you glad to go home, Sarah?" she said gently.

"No, no, father will hate me," sobbed the other; "I don't dare go home."

"It is not as bad as you imagine. It may seem hard now, but after you are established in your own



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home he will relent and come back to you and love you as a father should."

Brave words indeed, but Nellie was far from feeling the confidence she was trying to instill into the unfortunate Sarah.

"You will of course not stay any length of time in your father's house. You will —"

Sarah saw the drift of the remark and it threw her into a panic.

"Oh, no, no, no, I can't tell you! I can't stay here. I must go home. Don't ask me, don't ask me. I wish I was dead, oh!"

Nellie gently put her arm about the sobbing girl and led her into the house.

"Don't excite yourself unduly, dear Sarah. I will help you get ready and then I'll go with you to your home."

"No, no; I'll go alone; I want to go alone," and she hurriedly gathered up her few belongings and made her simple preparations for leaving the Harmdyk farm. She held out her hand for a farewell clasp but Nellie could not resist an impulse to take her in her arms and kiss her as a silent token of sympathy.

Since Dominie Van Weelen had had his talk with Jan Harmdyk that farmer had not been idle. He had something of the fierce antipathy of the old Hebrew psalmists who called upon the Lord that their enemies might be routed and utterly destroyed. That he missed their sublime tenderness toward the weak and the lowly never entered his mind. When the

"clay bottom" farmers crossed him in his plans and dug the drain, against his vehement protest, he declared positively that the work was of the devil, and that the Lord would punish the farmers in His own good time for their wickedness.

The time for one of these enemies of the Lord had now come, he declared after Dominie Van Weelen had opened his eyes to the true state of affairs in his household. Although he had no grudge against Sarah he experienced a fierce delight, such as the Hebrew psalmists often expressed in their half-barbarous war songs, in this seemingly direct answer to his prophecy. The others would feel the heavy hand upon them and the time would come when they would have to debase themselves.

Jan Harmdyk was entirely sincere in enunciating this belief in a direct retribution for his special benefit. And what he firmly believed he was by no means backward in expressing. He preached it on all possible occasions and only the people's inborn reverence for all things closely or remotely connected with their religion prevented them from making sport of a would-be prophet giving vent to his lamentations. That they put very little faith in his prophecies did not deter Jan Harmdyk from continuing them and insisting on them with greater and fiercer vehemence.

As a natural result Sarah's sordid little story became common property, and the tongues began to wag. That was a subject which no feeling of religious awe prevented the people from indulging in

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to their hearts' content. Mrs. Vander Wall made a suggestion anent Sarah's misfortune, and Mrs. Laarman repeated it to Mrs. Bilkema, who added several details and handed it over to her husband, who carried it to another young farmer, who repeated it to his wife, and so on and on and on.

The Harlem farmer's mind either feared mystery, as for instance shown in the mysticism of his religion, or would not rest until the mystery had been cleared up. Here was something out of the regular. The explanations were numerous and diverse. Who had betrayed the girl? Half a dozen people had half a dozen answers to this question the day after the scandal first began to be aired. The poor girl was dragged through the mud and no one seemed in the least aware of the cruelty of the process. Many felt a glow of satisfaction, while discussing the affair, that nothing of that nature would ever happen in *their* families.

Whatever influence the prophecies of Jan Harmdyk had on the Harlem farmers, there was one who treated them very seriously. Instead of turning a deaf ear to them the impressionable Gysbert Vissers accepted Jan's words with something like religious awe.

Was there perhaps not something in what Jan said? After all, Jan Harmdyk might be right. He insisted so vehemently that Gysbert thought he must have some basis for his belief. If someone had stated with sufficient positiveness that Gysbert was destined to become president of the United States

he would have readily believed it, just as he would have believed another claiming that he would die in the poor-house. When Jan Harmdyk declared that a blow from heaven had come upon the Vissers' home in punishment for Gysbert's part in the drain conspiracy, and when he repeated it and once more repeated it with an air of one who has an inside "tip" in regard to the inscrutable workings of Providence, Vissers gradually became convinced.

The first result was his withdrawal from the drain gang. Walking over to the ditch one Monday morning he picked up his spade and accosted Klaas Thielman, who was looked upon as the leader of the "clay bottom" farmers.

"You can scratch my name from the petition," he said sternly.

"But why, Gysbert? It ain't goin' to do no good. The commissioner has granted the petition and it can't be changed no more."

"Maybe it don't do no good, but when I see I'm wrong I ain't goin' to stay by the wrong. Scratch out my name I say."

"I ain't got the petition no more," explained Klaas in his kindly way; "the commissioner kept that in his office, but I can ask him if it's lawful to take a name off after it's once passed."

"Lawful or not lawful, I don't want nothing to do with this ditch after this."

"I'm sorry, Gysbert, you let that foolish talk of Jan Harmdyk make you feel that way, but even if you don't want nothing to do with the ditch it's

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goin' to be dug and you can't help it from doin' your farm a lot of good."

Gysbert was compelled to grant this, but he obstinately refused to reconsider his decision to withdraw from the workers.

But this bit of restitution did not prevent Gysbert Vissers from feeling keenly the shame that had come upon his family. Seeing in it as he did the hand of God, did not cause him to lose sight of the human agency that had been employed to punish him. The Scripture words, "Offenses must needs come but woe unto him through whom they come," ran vaguely through his mind, and he applied them to his own case. All the wrath he was capable of was visited upon the head of his erring daughter, and when she arrived home from the Harndyk farm there was a scene.

Gysbert's bitter reproaches were followed by a peremptory demand for the name of his daughter's betrayer. Oh, the bitter shame that she had brought upon him and his family! Would they ever dare to lift up their heads in the community again? And he a man who had always caused his children to go to church three times a Sunday, besides Sunday School and catechism — Gysbert's expressions were savage and he would think of no mitigating circumstances, even if the girl had offered any. She must shift for herself; he was not going to assume the burden.

But to all demands for the name of the man in the case Sarah turned a deaf ear, and her only

answer was a flood of tears and an obstinate refusal to answer questions.

"If that's the way you're goin' to act," thundered her father, "I wash my hands of the whole business. I was goin' to help you get settled like decent Christians should — but this — this — is a shame. If you don't learn your duty by tonight and answer me my question you don't stay in this house. Then you can go to *him*, and we'll see if we find out who he is."

Having delivered himself of this ultimatum the irate father walked away to "paris-green" his early potatoes, which task had been interrupted by the home-coming of his daughter; and Sarah hid her woe-begone face in the little bundle of clothes that she had carried from the Harmdyk farm. Mrs. Vissers was busying herself about the kitchen and did not venture to interfere while her husband was berating his child. But now she came up and gently patted the girl on the head.

"Come, Sarah, better tell father. Don't be so stiff-headed. This thing is so hard on all of us, and you can't help seein' that you ain't the only one who suffers."

As the sense of the shame came over the woman she involuntarily assumed a colder tone.

"I know it, mother," said Sarah, "I know it." She was dry-eyed now and a hard look had come into her face.

Putting on an apron she stolidly helped her mother with the work. The long afternoon wore away and

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the trees about the house were beginning to cast long shadows. Mrs. Vissers sat down in the close little kitchen to darn stockings, and Sarah went outside for a breath of air.

The river seemed cool and inviting as it wound its way through the pasture. In a shallow spot, under a majestic beech, the Jersey cow was standing knee-deep in water. Sarah looked vacantly at the gentle animal, subconsciously aware of the discrepancy between the gentle quiet of the scene and the perturbed state of her own being. Beyond were other trees and more cattle and horses, and the girl quite naturally wandered on, a vague sense of escape and consequent relief taking possession of her.

The trees became more numerous and the girl had to climb through one or more wire fences and over an old fashioned rail fence — a relic of pioneer days. Why should she go on? Why not go back home and resume her duties in the kitchen? Home! — and her father — and the insistent question! Suddenly the very thought of it made her sick at heart, and she walked swiftly on along the bank of the river as though in fear of pursuit.

From a thicket of trees and shrubbery she suddenly broke into an open space overgrown with soft velvety grass. The river was broad and deep and a giant elm spread its branches far over the water. She had never been here before, but instantly she recognized the place from the descriptions of Baby Johannes. There was the wire swing that Dominie Van Weelen had fastened to the huge

limbs twenty feet above the ground, giving the swimmer a leverage to swing himself far over the water before plunging into the cool depths. There was the spring board that the minister had built for the special benefit of Baby Johannes when he taught him how to dive. And there was the ring in the log to which the minister and his favorite were in the habit of attaching the chain of their canoe.

"It must be awfully deep," she said wonderingly, "else they could n't dive down from that swing."

An idea struck the girl that lighted up her face for a moment; but the next moment she again assumed the hard expression that marred the rich fullness of the lips and the natural kindliness of the eyes.

The idea returned in spite of her determination not to think of it. She began to toy with it because it offered a momentary relief from the dreary actuality. The morbid state of her mind seemed to stimulate her imagination and she took a grim pleasure in elaborating on the picture.

Would her eyes remain open in the water and would she look very pale when they should find her? Suppose they should fail to find her and the summer should pass and the autumn should come and then the winter and the snow and the ice. The ice! She shuddered; to be imprisoned in the chill water with the ice over head and the winds moaning in the hours of the early dawn, with the cold stars glinting from the sky and everybody but she asleep! Her strange fancy made her think that she would feel it all —



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the loneliness, the cold, the awful darkness and the low moaning wind.

No, they would find her and bear her home. Who would come upon her first, and where would it be? Did a body come to the surface soon? Would it be Dominie Van Weelen, since he came here so often? Would he think harshly of her, of her who had added a positive sin to a despicable weakness? But he had not been unkind when she fainted in the Harmdyk home. If he was so kind could it not be that God would be merciful?

Sarah started up from her reverie.

"I've got to go home," she said; "it's gettin' late."

But she did not arise. The thought of home was intolerable and she allowed the twilight to deepen. Phantastic shapes seemed to form themselves in the shrubbery a few feet away, and the long dim shadows of the trees fell waveringly upon the water. The heat was oppressive and the water seemed increasingly inviting as the dusk deepened. She need but wait till the darkness had obscured the water below, take a firm hold of the diving swing—a little run—a quick jump—let go of the swing, and all would be over.

The girl was no longer playing with a fancy. The morbid picture that had seemed so harmless had turned on her like a living thing, and instead of calling it into being and dismissing it at will, she was gripped by it, and the grim alternative confronted her of going home to her shame and misery or taking

a quick leap into the water that looked so cool and clear.

“And in that sleep of death what dreams may come.”

Sarah had never heard of Hamlet, and she did not repeat his lines, but she felt them with every nerve in her body quiver. To leave this world and her father and mother and friends — it seemed a small thing compared with the misery she saw ahead. If that were all she would rush into the arms of death with a cry of gladness.

But she had been reared in the stern Calvinistic faith of the Christian Reformed people who would have looked upon the *Bridge of Sighs* as dangerous doctrine if they had known the poem, and who were not disposed to “leave her sins with her Saviour.”

After the plunge — no it was not merely a matter of dreams. Her morbidly nimble imagination led her back to the little church in its clump of trees and the long sermons on eternal punishment. The awful word pictures of the doom of the unrepentant — how she had often trembled at them when a little girl — came vividly to mind.

But the thought of escape was alluring. Shall she take the leap into the dark? Shall she stake all upon one bold plunge?

Dominie Van Weelen walked to the Vissers farm to help Sarah, if necessary, over the embarrassments of her home-coming. It was the fifteenth of July,

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and the seed-corn, he knew, had been "worked out" on this day. On visiting the Harndyk farm he had been told by Nellie about Sarah's departure and her acute distress at the approaching meeting with her father.

"*Ja*, Sarah's out doors," said Mrs. Vissers in answer to his question; but a search of the premises failed to locate her. A few questions disclosed the scene at the home-coming, and the minister divined the state of mind in which the unfortunate girl must now find herself. His eye rested on the cool river winding through the rich pasture, and almost instinctively a thought came to him that made him shiver.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Vissers becoming nervous because her daughter could not be found.

"Nothing; I merely had a chill. Sarah must have gone back to Harndyk's."

Making some excuse he hurried to the parsonage, then ran to the river bank where he found Baby Johannes paddling about in his canoe.

"Quick, Baby Johannes, come to shore." The boy's little arms quivered with excitement and dexterously plied the paddle.

"No, not this time, Baby Johannes. I can't have an ounce more weight than necessary."

The minister was several feet away from shore before the boy could ask a question, and the next moment Baby Johannes saw the canoe shooting around the bend of the river and gliding out of sight.

Late that night when the twilight had deepened into darkness the minister quietly paddled the canoe homeward. There was no need of haste now, for the lost had been found. Arrived at the parsonage he gave Sarah in charge of Mrs. Wachs with the insistent command that she was to be given every possible care. The girl stood with bowed head as she heard the kindly command given, and there dawned in her heart a fierce joy that she had been saved from her terrible temptation.

There were many hours of darkness in Dominie Van Weelen's life as well as many hours of triumph. But in all his after years he never became so disheartened that the single look of gratitude Sarah gave him did not cheer his path, and never a joy seemed keener than this. And often when his own hours of temptation came, as they could not help but come, the memory of her simple faith in him was like a protecting angel, always pointing upward.

## CHAPTER XII

### A SIMILE

**G**YSBERT VISSERS found he was able to draw out considerable support among the Harlem people in his attitude toward Sarah. She had disgraced his home and, it was whispered, had made an attempt at suicide. Why should a father take back into his home a daughter who had proved so wayward and perverse?

Having been told of Gysbert's revised attitude toward the drain question, Jan Harmdyk naturally felt a great deal more kindly toward that afflicted parent than he had done previously.

"He done right not to take her back," he said; "she is a disgrace to the congregation."

"So was Mary Magdalene," retorted Nellie with considerable heat, "yet I remember from the old Dutch Bible you used to make me read that Christ did not throw her over; and she was a stranger to him, not a daughter."

"Huh, huh," was Jan's only answer. Rather afraid of the clean-cut logic of his educated daughter, he sometimes suppressed his itch for an argument.

The gang of farmers working on the drain was like the comic paper's idea of a ladies' sewing circle

—like the newspaper humorist's picture of the philosophers in the village grocery store. There the theological problems were settled and the news of the country-side was rolled over numerous tongues with special relish for the juicy morsels. Few of the farmers of Harlem took a newspaper except *De Grondwet* and a religious weekly of their own persuasion, and most of them looked upon the dailies of the cities as too worldly for their households. In lieu of this institution, deemed so necessary in "the world," the farmers composed verbal editorials and leading articles while congregating for a task like the digging of the big ditch.

"They say she really tried to make away with herself," said Dirk Stormzand. The clay sticking to his spade, he soaked the blade in the dirty water of the ditch and then scraped it with the sole of his rubber boot.

"The minister says 'tain't so," declared Klaas Thielman who rather felt disposed to blame Gysbert Visser. A number of the other farmers gathered about the speakers and the progress of the Harlem drain was not at all advanced while they were settling the right or the wrong of this pressing question.

"Well, the minister got her home in his canoe, so where could she have been if not near the river, and what should a girl in her condition want to do there at that time in the evening?"

"I don't know nothing about that," was the answer, "but I take Dominie Van Weelen's word for what happened."

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"What I'd like to know," remarked one of the farmers, "is what business it is of Dominie Van Weelen. She ain't his daughter and why must he come in between Gysbert and his shameless girl?"

"I'm afraid he's mixin' too much in them things," observed Dirk Stormzand, "instead of seein' to it that the Word is preached to his people in all its purity."

"There you're goin' too far to my way of thinkin'," retorted Klaas Thielman. "If a father don't take care of his daughter someone else must. Ain't that so?" Several heads nodded approval.

"No, that ain't so," deposed Dirk with decision. "I'm thinkin' that Gysbert done right not to want to keep a harlot in his house; and do you think it's goin' to be a good example for the other girls in Harlem that the minister takes her to his house and takes care of her and treats her just like she was a virtuous girl?"

"Well, what's you goin' to do? Jan Harmdyk throws her out of his house. Her father don't want her to stay with him. If they all look upon it that way where is the poor girl goin' to stay? Someone's got to take care of her." Klaas Thielman considered this unanswerable.

"In her husband's house—there's where she ought to stay; and I say right here that as long as she's as stiff-headed about that as Gysbert says she is it serves her right that no one will take care of her. That's the only way to make her confess."

There was a general murmur of approval among

the farmers. In the capacity of news-gatherers they had the baffled feeling the trained reporter experiences when the one point in the chain of events that would make his story a "lead" is undiscoverable — when the name of the "man higher up" who bribed the village alderman cannot be found. The girl merited punishment for withholding the one bit of information that they needed to make their highly moral reflections on the depravity of the younger generation as telling as possible.

"The way I look at it," said Dirk Stormzand, "Dominie should not get mixed up in a scandal like that. You know the Bible says we must keep away from evil not only, but from the appearance of evil."

No one in the crowd caring to dispute the opinion of the theologian of Harlem, the question was looked upon as settled and work was resumed.

Jan Harmdyk's elation over Nellie's return to the farm tasks was short lived. When he and Ezra returned home from the field the evening after Sarah left the cows were unmilked.

"What now, why did n't you do the milkin'?" demanded Ezra discontentedly.

Before she could answer her father said,

"Nell, you forgot the milkin'." He said it uncertainly, not quite sure whether his educated daughter would resent the domineering tone.

"No, father, I did not forget; I do not propose to do the milking in the future."

"Not do the milkin'?" Well, why, what's the matter?"



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"I might as well tell you I did that work not because I liked it, but to take the burden off Sarah's shoulders. She was not in fit physical condition to assume the heavy tasks."

"So you deceived your own father? That's what they learn you in school?" Scorn was written in every line of the old man's face.

"No, that is not what is taught in school." Nellie's words were clear cut and she spoke with a decisiveness before which the stern old man quailed. "I saw you committing a wrong against a girl who happened to be in your power for the time being, and I took it upon myself to protect her. In shielding her I was really showing you a kindness. But now that you can no longer hurt her I do not care to keep up the deceit I practiced to shield her and you will have to get someone else to do the rough work. I do not object to managing the house but do not propose to be turned into a slave. You have money enough to secure sufficient help and that is what I would advise you to do."

Not a word answered Jan Harmdyk to his daughter's clear and cutting remark, but as he strode to the cow-yard carrying the milking pail and can the bitter thought of how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child took possession of his being. Here he had taken the trouble of educating the girl, spending untold sums of money on her and she repaid him in this way. The legacy left Nellie by his dead wife and that had paid for her education Jan Harmdyk always looked

upon as capital illegitimately withdrawn from his farm.

The sense of having been wronged growing deeper and deeper as he allowed his mind to dwell on it, he viciously pushed back the leg of the cow with his milking stool and "swatted" a fly that persisted in worrying him. The cow complicated matters by walking away and overturning the pail. Jan Harmdyk was not given to profanity, but he closed his mouth with a snap and hurled the stool after the frightened animal. And as he did so the look in his eye was such that the recording angel could not help but place a blacker mark behind his name than if he had indulged in an honest "damn."

When the animal had been quieted and the milk was again streaming rhythmically into the pail the thought of what Nellie had said again obtruded itself. Four years ago he would have used coercion. But how to do that now? Somehow he felt that his daughter had escaped him and had won an independence beyond his reach. Suppose he should use force, what would happen? He did not know; at least he could not make a guess at what his daughter would do, but instinctively he felt that coercion would be of no avail. The willful man stood baffled and there was rage in his heart too deep for expression.

"That's what you get," he soliloquized, "that's what you get when a good-for-nothing minister like Dominie Van Weelen is called to the church."

Just how Dominie Van Weelen could be responsible for Jan Harmdyk's inability to control his daughter

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Jan might have found hard to explain. Instinctively he felt however that the liberal-minded minister would have sympathized with the girl.

Unable to hide his ill humor as his father had done, Ezra abused Nellie with a splendid disregard of the fact that she was his sister.

His eyes aflame, Baby Johannes clinched his little fists as he heard his divinity called degrading names.

"I wish I was big," he said hotly, "I'd show him!"

"What's that?" snapped the burly brother, "you'd lick me, you little rat," and he was about to strike the little fellow for his impudence.

Quickly putting her little darling behind her protectingly, Nellie faced Ezra without a quiver. He quailed before her steady look and walked away muttering something about her "damned stylishness." Ezra was not a church member and he had a reputation in Harlem as a "rough-neck." He had no scruples about using a forceful expletive when he thought the occasion demanded it.

The strained relations in the Harmdyk family were not mended that night at supper when Nellie announced that in the morning she intended to pay a visit to Sarah Vissers at the parsonage. A short note from Dominie Van Weelen had brought her to this decision. Sarah was moody and depressed, he wrote. She persisted in thinking life held nothing more for her. Everybody looked down upon her, she believed, and Mrs. Wachs' behavior had only strengthened this impression. That good woman had

uncompromising notions about feminine propriety that did not dispose her to treat the unfortunate girl charitably.

"What Sarah needs," the minister wrote, "is the sympathy of a good woman. It is absolutely necessary for her physical health, to say nothing of her mental condition."

Ezra's opposition to the proposed visit was even more determined than his father's. He broke into a tirade against Dominie Van Weelen and the "whole rotten tribe of ministers," and Jan felt in duty bound to rebuke him. But when the boy had exhausted his venom the old man said,

"That's goin' too far, Nell, and I've got to put my foot down. You ain't goin' to see that harlot."

Nellie's face flushed at the direct term but she lost none of the determination of her look.

"I see very well, father," she said quietly, "that there is going to be a great deal of trouble in this house. I don't mean to be disrespectful to you but I am going to live my own life as I see it, and if you wish to have any peace at all while I am home you will have to let me go my own way."

"If you go there tomorrow," snapped the old man, "you don't come back to this house."

"Very well; last week I received a letter from Prof. Matthewson offering me a position in Northville College and I would just as soon accept it."

Bursting into tears at this announcement Baby Johannes buried his head in Nellie's lap. Instantly the girl knew that she was bound to this stormy

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home and that the escape was not as easy as she had supposed. But her words had been charged with a determination that cooled the fierce anger of her father. While Nellie was discovering the tie that bound her, Jan Harmdyk learned the essence of his daughter's freedom, and it made his anger impotent and futile. Not disposed to press the threat of expulsion from home he assumed a gentler tone.

At the parsonage Sarah was despondent and moody. Her undisguised worship of Dominie Van Weelen alone saved her from the utter depths and preserved in her comely face the fluttering gleam of spiritual association with her fellows. It was when this feeling of worship was most intense that the tears came, and only at those times the minister felt at ease about his charge. He was by experience fairly well acquainted with the phenomenon of self-abasement, and felt sure that tears and the darker danger-thoughts do not go together. When the minister was present Mrs. Wachs preserved a respectful silence about the presence of the girl in the house, but when alone with Sarah she was not so considerate.

"What is the world comin' to?" she wailed. "To bring disgrace upon your old father and mother, *ach! ach!* that 's bad enough already, but then to act so stiff-headed. You can't live on the minister all your life, can you? And your father won't have you, so what are you goin' to do without a husband? You're disgracin' the minister by hangin' on here, and me that has always been respectable feels it keen, I can tell you that, *ach! ach!*"

When Dominie Van Weelen reentered the room later in the day there was a look on the girl's face that decided him to appeal to Nellie Harmdyk for aid. The house-keeper, he guessed, was doing all she could to reestablish at the parsonage an equilibrium of respectability and was honestly concerned about her minister's career; but the result of her efforts filled him with concern.

When Nellie came out of Sarah's room, where the two girls had had a talk, she looked cheerful and happy, and a few minutes later Sarah joined the family group with the traces of recent tears but newly wiped away. There was that indefinable look in her eye that immediately put the minister at ease, and before long as the talk on various subjects flowed freely, the girl smiled merrily and showed other signs of a return to the sunny disposition that had characterized her before her trouble. She became interested in the discussions and contributed her own modest ideas freely and spontaneously. In a thousand ways she made clear that the ground on which the minister and Nellie walked was to her holy ground. In the face of Nellie too there was a radiant happiness that would not allow the sharper feelings which had characterized her former meetings with the minister to come to the surface.

"It blesseth her that gives and her that takes," the minister found occasion to quote in the course of the talk. Nellie shot a quick glance of appreciation at the man for his quick intuition; and Sarah, who did not know that Dominie Van Weelen was making

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free with Portia's speech, nevertheless responded to the sentiment and became still more cheerfully grateful than before.

The only glum member in the group was Mrs. Wachs. She had her own ideas about the propriety of a minister indulging in a conversation in English—and that with a fallen woman and a girl, who was reported to be far from the fold of the Christian Reformed Church!

No longer afraid that Dominie Van Weelen would ask her about the state of her soul Nellie prepared to readjust her attitude toward the minister. By treating her as an equal he had drawn her into the service without wasting words about what she might or might not believe. His asking her for help in the reclaiming of the unfortunate Sarah was to Nellie a subtle form of flattery to which the intensely feminine in her immediately responded. Before meeting him she had been prepared for smug complacency. Instead she found a charity that far surpassed her own. She had expected a flow of talk bristling with Bible texts; instead she heard Shakespeare pressed into service even when there was a splendid opportunity to put hand on heart and give a profound meaning to the sentiment that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Involuntarily Nellie Harmdyk compared the minister with Harry Matthewson. The well-modulated voice of the handsome young professor had charmed her inordinately. The well-placed emphasis, the sure-footed accent, the subtle shades of

meaning in the choice of words, the rare faculty of making tone color reenforce "meaning" color — all this Prof. Matthewson possessed in a marked degree and it was all music to the girl's ear. And she had never confessed even to herself what a cloud had fallen upon her soul when their conversation in the woods ended in the state of the weather.

The voice of Dominie Van Weelen was not musically modulated and his talk did not always have the full even flow that had been the charm of Matthewson's conversation. In fact, he frequently hesitated and the right word did not always come immediately. But this did not seem a defect to Nellie. There was something in the young minister's personality that the professor lacked. She could not define it: Who can pigeonhole the mysteries of personality? Then the word flashed into her brain — *strength*. Immediately by the law of contrast came back to her the scene in the woods — the desire in the professor's eyes checked by the impulse of prudence always on guard. Dominie Van Weelen, she felt, could never have acted thus. If he loved a girl, she felt sure, he would fight gods and devils and throw prudence to the dogs rather than lose her.

Moreover his arms and legs looked capable, and she too felt that he was "noble looking." But in spite of this spiritual quality she realized with analytic honesty that the basis for the impression of innate dignity in the minister consisted in a pair of strong legs, an arm that could back up a blow with its full share of muscle, a body that could stand



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a day's work, and a face in which animal strength was spiritualized and ennobled. Dominie Van Weelen would never whine, she felt sure. He would "face the music" at every turn and would always carry his full share of the load as well as part of the share of others.

And not least important in the mental category that the girl made of Dominie Van Weelen's characteristics was the fact that he did not assume to be a spirit encumbered with the flesh, looking upon the body as something to be endured for a season until it could leave this vale of tears. He was a man who could have found a very real pleasure in following some other profession, but who had chosen the ministry because it offered the greatest possible outlet for his altruistic passion.

"But why did you come to Harlem?" she could not help asking. He was walking by her side along the winding country road after her visit to the parsonage.

"Perhaps it was intuition," he answered flippantly looking archly in her eyes until her cheeks were suffused with red.

"The reason I ask," she continued, refusing to be flippant, "is because it seems to me you would fit in so much better in a large city church — an institutional church, for instance."

"But you must remember," he exclaimed with apparent earnestness, "there are no institutional churches in our denomination."

"But why should you be in the Christian Re-

formed Church at all?" A rather daring question by a girl who a few days before had shown a very different attitude toward the minister; but she was no longer afraid that he would ask the terrible question: "How is it with your soul?"

"If I were Mrs. Wachs," he said still refusing to be serious, "I suppose I would answer, because there is only one Dutch God. But perhaps you are not orthodox enough to believe that."

Nellie did not find an appropriate answer.

"It is rather peculiar — this choosing of a certain denomination over another — like choosing a wife. Has it ever struck you: A man swears by all the gods that the lady of his choice is the only one he could ever have loved; he declares that there must have been a conjunction of their souls in some other existence; that he could not by any possible chance ever have loved anyone else, and that one was born specially to round out the life of the other. But if he had been brought up in another county or state or country he would have made the same vows to someone else. Mere propinquity cuts an enormous figure but most of us have enough of the poet in us to ignore it."

"That's cold-blooded reason and can have no place in a love affair," she declared argumentatively.

"Well, then, if that illustration is lost on you, I suppose I am in this denomination for the same reason that many a man is a democrat."

"Because his father was? A rather subtle inference, don't you think?"

"Extremely," he laughed. "To the ultra-orthodox this would sound almost sacrilegious, but I believe you understand and there is no harm done. It would not be safe however to repeat it to Mrs. Wachs."

"But if you are not in earnest about your work, why do you stick to it, especially in a little country place like this?" There was disappointment in the girl's voice. Gradually from unreasoning antagonism she had veered around to at least incipient hero-worship, and any suggestion of frivolity jarred on her in connection with the image she was putting together and endowing with many mysterious qualities of lofty endeavor. He caught the tone of disappointment and was thrilled by it, intuitively divining its meaning.

"Don't think for a minute that I am not in earnest about my work," he said with the decisiveness that characterized him when he meant his words to carry. "I was merely trying to show you that the reason of my working in this denomination is a very natural one. I was brought up in it from childhood and there was no mystic call that brought me to enter this particular church. I supposed that, having lived in a community like this you were familiar with some such notion and I did not like to lay claim to any secret distinction that might accrue from such an assumption."

"But that does not answer my question," persisted the girl, knowing that her inquisitiveness could not be offensive since it implied a compliment. "I

ask you why a man of your ability buries himself in a small country place and you answer that you are not in the Christian Reformed denomination because of any mystic call. You make the problem more perplexing instead of clearing it up."

"I don't know if you would understand," he said musingly, "but I do not look upon it as burying myself. On the contrary, I would look upon myself in that way if I were in a large church where the income of every member is a thousand dollars or more. I think you can get my meaning better if I put it in terms of the aggregate than if I isolate a single community. There are thousands and hundreds of thousands of little country communities in America just like this one, and every one of them must be served. If you can visualize the millions of farmers with their little organizations, mostly religious, and then think of the forces that are constantly at work to retard or to advance them, you can catch something of the meaning of being one of those forces for good. This is something like settlement work. When Jane Addams went into that work they told her she was burying herself. She did not think so, although I don't suppose she ever expected to become famous. But she knew that as long as she was really helping others she could never be burying herself; because, as far as it goes, there is really a great deal in the Comptean philosophy of influence."

"But why these Dutch farmers?" the girl persisted as soon as she had an opportunity to break into his speech; "they don't appreciate anything of the

kind. I don't quite see your analogy of the country and the settlements."

"It's a very close one though; the settlements are crowded with immigrants; these Hollander farmers arrived only a comparatively short time ago. The dwellers in the settlements are earnest and have in them great possibilities; so do the Hollanders of Harlem. But in both cases service is required before these possibilities are available for the nation. From your reading of English literature you know that poets who lived in towns used to describe the country as a sort of Arcadia where the only occupation of the rustic swain was to toot on oaten pipes, or sigh away his soul for some lovely Cloe; where the blithesome milkmaid always went singing in sweet unconcern."

"Yes," interrupted Nellie, "but instead of that the cow switches her tail across her face and steps into the pail. That happened to me the other day." Dominie Van Weelen laughed heartily.

"That's the funny side of it, but there's another side too. The poet Crabbe saw that. He saw the rustic swain in the garb of the Man With the Hoe, and the milkmaid burdened with toil that breaks the spirit and starves the soul. To do my part in bringing sweetness into the lives of these is my ambition, and I look upon it as a great one."

Nellie was deeply affected. It had all been said with a simplicity yet with a poetic fervor that left no question of the man's sincerity.

"You know," he said after a while, his face light-

ing up with the joy of the poet who has found the one word of his highest inspiration, "I could not help but think of all the little rural communities scattered all over the country, as I came down from home last spring. The winter was past but here and there on the northern hillsides along the railroad track, little patches of white still lingered on far into the spring, inert and cold until the millions of sunbeams should penetrate the shadows of the hills. That's how these little rural communities like Harlem look to me. All the world about them is progressing and is yielding to the divine impulse of world-brotherhood, while in the country the world's social ideals, that it has acquired during the past century, have not penetrated the shadows that in some cases are almost medieval. To help melt the snow is my work."

Inspired with the minister's poetic vision Nellie flushed as with a glory of romance. Then she thought of Sarah and sighed. The actual was so much less lovely than the picture! When the talk drifted back to the unfortunate girl he said with a directness that was the fruit of deep-seated delicacy,

"We must find out who the man is; the girl must be given a home of her own. What reason she can have for concealment I can't understand."

"She told me this afternoon she was unwilling to bring sorrow to others of whom she thought more than of her own life; and she was willing to bear the shame rather than hurt them. It's all rather mysterious."

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"Yes, but we'll have to keep on bringing a little sunshine to her every day in this woman's crisis of hers. Will you come again — soon?"

"Yes, if you think I can help you." Involuntarily she held out her hand as a token of sealing her promise and he took it with an eagerness that surprised himself. The next moment she was gone and his walk homeward seemed a cheerless one.

## CHAPTER XIII

### WHEN BLOOD RUNS HIGH

**A**LL through the months of spring and early summer the Harlem farmers kept at their task of digging the big drain as steadily as the work on their farms would permit. Many of them worked far into the night in the fields and arose in the morning before the sun was up, thus trying to do the day's work on the farm before seven and after six to leave the intervening hours for work on the drain. The county paid the men in hard cash for their labor, and hard cash was not to be despised in a place far from market — a place where the system of barter was still much in vogue, and where the housewife often was compelled to provide for taxes that fell due in the winter time by selling butter and eggs during the summer, and religiously saving the pennies in the old teapot behind the family clock. Even the well-to-do farmers like Jan Harmdyk, Hendrick Slotman and Klaas Thielman, whose farms would have brought them a small fortune, were often put to it to secure the actual cash, and Sarah's giving a certain length of service for ten bushels of seed-corn was not at all an isolated case.

Moreover, the big drain had become an obsession



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with many of the farmers. They were as interested in it as an artist in his picture or an engineer in the tunnel he is building. It was no longer merely a matter of gain with them, although the drain would benefit them and would reclaim hundreds of acres of low land of the "clay-bottom" farmers. As the work progressed, interest in the job itself, distinct from the financial interest involved, grew deeper and deeper, until before long the big ditch was the darling project that occupied most of the waking moments of many of the farmers. The eye delighted in the long straight line that marked the drain and in the smooth perpendicular walls that showed the marks of the spades in the sticky clay soil. Since something like the delight of the artist was gratified in making the ditch look straight and clean cut, there would have been a protest if anyone had deviated in the slightest degree from the exact line even though it would not make the drain any less serviceable. The farmers dug their spades into the rich, tallow-like earth with something of the fondness with which the artist lays the paint upon the canvas.

When Thackeray, Dickens, and some of the other mid-Nineteenth Century novelists came to the end of their thousand-page books, they were often in the habit of adding a paragraph of regret that they were now compelled to dismiss the creatures of their fancies. Some such feeling of regret came over the Harlem farmers when the end of their task approached, and when they began to see that within a very few days the drain would be completed. There

would be a void in their daily existence that the more prosaic tasks in the fields could not fill. The fellowship in work had been a goodly one.

When Klaas Thielman therefore suggested that they should commemorate the event by public exercises he was eagerly applauded, and the plan was thoroughly discussed by the laborers in the ditch, and later these once more discussed it with their wives and children at home. The drain was to be dedicated with pomp and ceremony, and it was discussed and once more discussed like the annual program of a Sunday School convention.

Naturally Dominie Van Weelen's aid was solicited. There seldom was a barn-raising among the Harlem farmers when the minister was not asked to offer prayer and make a few remarks. In some cases these remarks had been known to develop into many more than a few; and the event like the commemoration of the completion of the darling project of the "clay-bottom" farmers could not be properly observed without the help of Dominie Van Weelen. The members of the Reformed church interested in the project readily assented to the plan that the Christian Reformed minister should preside, all the more so because his oratory had made him nearly as popular among them as he was among his own people.

There was a suggestion of progressiveness in the digging of the drain that strongly appealed to the minister. Looking upon it as an indication of the "melting of the snow," he entered into the spirit of

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the celebration with an enthusiasm that was contagious.

Many years later the people of Harlem remembered the speech he made that day. It was referred to as The Speech, no further qualifying term being necessary to make the listener understand which particular speech was referred to—as if a citizen of the United States should speak of the *Constitution* or of the *Declaration of Independence*. It differed widely from the usual talk of the minister speaking about something he does not understand: generalities capped with a neat moral applicable to all but directly hitting none. Taking drains as his theme, for the time being he left theology out of the discussion as irrelevant. The progress of the race, the work of reclamation and conservation, the obligation to recognize the claims of the physical—these formed the topics of the talk. And last and happiest of all, he showed his appreciation of the farmers' conception of the drain as a work of art. This drew their applause and when he sat down The Speech had made so great an impression upon the diggers that the balance of the programme seemed flat in comparison.

So strong in fact was the impression made that Dirk Stormzand forgot to mention the fact that Dominie Van Weelen had not quoted a single Bible text. And this absence of theology was not held against the minister until the "first fine careless rapture" of the artist-diggers had passed away.

During his talk Dominie Van Weelen's glance wan-

dered repeatedly to Jan Harmdyk and Nellie at the back of the audience. A few of the other farmers who had opposed the digging of the drain were present. But instead of being a disturbing element they only inspired the speaker to put the advantages to be derived from the ditch by the community in the more favorable light. When the last number on the programme, consisting in the singing of two stanzas of the Forty-second Psalm under the leadership of Dirk Stormzand, had finally been given, Jan Harmdyk arose. All eyes were turned to him in surprise, and Klaas Thielman, upon whom the arduous duties of chairman of the meeting weighed heavily, took his quid of tobacco from his mouth and loudly cleared his throat to be ready for action in case the necessity should arise.

"Here you go singin' psalms and prayin'," Jan began without asking leave of the chairman to speak, "to celebrate a work which is of the devil. Do you think the blessing of God can be upon this drain, what takes the bread out of the mouth of your neighbors? Take my word for it, the Lord will punish all of you like he punished Gysbert Vissers —"

Nellie tugged at her father's coat in an attempt to make him sit down and she whispered, "For shame, Father." But the old man paid no attention to it. His idiomatic Dutch became more biting as he continued:

"Take my word for it, the floods will come and wipe out you and your farms and in that day the little ditch you 've dug ain't goin' to save you."

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"Last spring he did n't think it was so mighty little," whispered Hendrick Slotman to a neighbor; "then he talked as if the ditch was goin' to be as big — as big — as Lake Michigan."

But Jan Harmdyk paid no attention to any possible criticism that might be passed on his remarks. Throwing restraint to the winds he launched out into the most severe strictures on the depravity of his neighbors that even that stern community had ever listened to. When he sat down he had practically consigned them all to the nethermost depths. There was a pause of astonishment before the buzz of talk broke forth.

"Come, Nell, let's go home," said the old man.

"No, Father," she answered gently, "I shall stay a while."

"Huh! huh!" he grunted but he made no further attempt to persuade her to come along, refusing himself to stay longer.

Nellie mingled freely with the crowd and in a very short time the women, who at first responded to her advances shyly, were put at ease by the girl. In less time than it had taken her father to make his speech she had taken away the effect of it, and that without once referring to the unpleasant subject.

"And when she first come home they said she was that stuck-up that she would n't talk Dutch no more even," said one old woman to her neighbor as the girl passed on to talk to another group.

"Ja, people will talk," was the answer, "but I never believed it."

Dominie Van Weelen approached Nellie and raised his hat as he greeted her.

"Did you see that?" said Mrs. Slotman to Mrs. Stormzand; "there must be something between them. Nellie would make him a good wife!"

"I have been trying to melt a little of that snow," said Nellie smilingly, and the minister was strangely thrilled by the simple words.

"I'm very glad, I'm very glad," was all he could say.

"You made a splendid speech. If that does not make the snow fairly drip the crust is harder than I think it is."

"But it was in Dutch," he said smiling. "It seems there is always a fly in the ointment."

"Do you know, I never thought of that while you were speaking. I'm heartily ashamed of what I said about the Dutch. I suppose I need thawing out as much as most of the people here. I was congealed in a different way but it was about as bad."

"No, no, don't say that. It was rather — rather — adorable!"

Blushing deeply the girl jabbed the point of her parasol into the loose earth.

"Did you enjoy yourself talking to the Harlem women?"

"Well, they were a bit cool at first, and shy, but it was rather pleasant. And then, I had to — had to — overcome the impression father left."

"He feels strongly on the subject now," the minister tried to reassure her, "but by and by when he

sees the good results of the drainage project, I'm sure he will find that it does not hurt his farm, and then he will change his mind."

"I fear not." Nellie spoke with a conviction born of a habit of looking facts straight in the face. Straightway he respected her in a new way, and for just the tiniest fraction of a second he looked into her resolute eyes. She returned the look with a steadiness which he interpreted as meaning that she was entirely "fancy free." Oddly enough the steadiness of the look disconcerted him for the moment and he was conscious of a pang. The fire of passion for socially and spiritually redeeming his people strangely seemed for the moment to burn low.

When she started for home Dominie Van Weelen started out to walk along beside her. In his anxiety not to miss her he forgot to shake hands with most of the people present, as a token of farewell.

"Mark my word, there's something up between them two," said Mrs. Slotman again, this time to the entire group. Several exclamations of "*Ja, ja*," greeted this opinion. With the inevitable news instinct of those who are deprived of the newspaper the people straightway began the discussion of future possibilities.

Tripping along the country road covered with its two or three inches of dust and loose sand, Nellie daintily held her skirts clear of the milk-weeds growing in great profusion along the path. The minister walked firmly by her side with no thought of the milk-weeds, taking one step to two of hers, innately

aware of the incongruity of a big, broad-shouldered man stepping along mincingly on a rough country road where the very inequality of the ground makes the attempt to keep step nothing short of ludicrous. Her head came slightly above his shoulders, and the luxurious black hair, with its suggestion of physical vigor, fairly glistened in the afternoon sun. His fingers itched to touch it.

"Do you like canoeing?" he asked presently to get his mind off the alluring thought.

"I love it."

"A real sister of Baby Johannes all right. He takes to water like a fish."

"Yes, that's all he talks about. No, I take that back; most of his talk is about Dominie Van Weelen."

"Is n't it strange," interrupted the minister quickly, "when he is with me he is continually talking of sister Nellie. In fact, I knew you quite well before I ever saw you."

"Poor little fellow! Every time I think of it I feel guilty for having deserted him to go to school." She stopped in the path, overcome for the moment by one of those unaccountable gusts of feeling that make the body tingle to the finger-tips.

"I have never thanked you for what you have done for the little fellow, but it is not because I do not feel grateful."

She held out her hand involuntarily and he seized it with an eagerness that surprised them both. But not finding anything to say, he looked into her eyes again. Still the same unflinching return.



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"Do you know," she said presently, "if it were not for that boy I would leave Harlem in September."

"Would you really leave?" he faltered.

"Yes, I had a chance to teach English in Northville College."

"And Baby Johannes is the only one who keeps you here? Bless the little fellow!"

"There would be nothing gained by disguising from you that it is not my father who keeps me here."

"I was not thinking of him."

"Yes," she mused, more to herself than to the minister, "little Baby Johannes! He is so small! And four years ago Ezra was but a few years older. But he always was more robust. And now he is a man — and I have lost him."

"Lost him?" the minister queried.

"I mean mother would be sorry if she were here." It was the first time she had spoken to him of her mother and the growing intimacy that it suggested sent through him an unaccountable thrill.

"She must have given a great love to her children," he said softly.

"She was a wonderful mother," she answered looking into his eyes self-consciously. "And almost her last thought was of Ezra. She seemed to see him grown to manhood. I remember how he put his arm under her head, and she spoke of his strength. And if I had remained at home these four years I might have helped him to become what she hoped for. I did not realize then what it is for a young boy, who

has always had the care of a wonderful mother, to be suddenly thrown upon his own resources and suddenly to have the props of love knocked from under him."

The minister refrained from comment and later Nellie wondered at his forbearance. Any other minister, she told herself, would have eagerly seized upon this opening for platitudes — an opening which she herself had made.

"And what hurts me most is that I can't help but feel repelled by him as he is now. That shows my narrowness, I suppose. Mother would have loved him all the more and would have brought him back."

The minister did not make the obvious reply that the prayers of such a mother would avail much and that the boy would feel that power some day. Instead he preferred to look things straight in the face.

"I can understand your feeling of repugnance. It is an instinctive reaction from the unlovely wherever found. It was of course very unfortunate that he was thrown upon his own resources in the critical years of adolescence. You might perhaps expect me as a minister to take him in hand, but it would be useless to preach to him."

"Oh, no, no, I don't expect that of you," she hastened to say, almost in alarm.

"We must face the fact that Ezra has grown up into a rowdy and is inclined to brutality. But I suspect — all the more so because of what you have told me about his mother — that there are possibilities in him. But preaching would never bring these out;

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and if it did they would n't be worth much. If I could only get close to him, like I can to Baby Johannes," he said wistfully.

Arrived at the farm, the minister refused to come in, pleading a sermon to be written. He knew as well as Nellie that it was not necessary to shake hands in token of farewell, but he chose to take advantage of the local custom and exceeded it in the length of the operation.

"I was not thinking of him," sang in the girl's ears as she went into the house. Catching sight of her pretty face in the mirror before which she was smoothing a recalcitrant strand of hair, she softly repeated the words and blushed.

Dominie Van Weelen leisurely walked along the path homeward and absent-mindedly struck off the heads of the milk-weeds with a willow twig he was carrying.

*"Zoo! Dominie."*

It was Klaas Thielman who thus accosted him with apparent abruptness because the minister had not noticed his approach.

The two stopped for a neighborly chat and Jan Harmdyk's speech very naturally formed the subject of their talk.

"Now that the drain has been dug," said the minister, "it is up to us to win back Jan Harmdyk. I shall do what I can; but upon you, as his fellow elder and as the leader of the 'clay bottom' farmers, will devolve most of the work of bringing this about. I hereby appoint you as my special deputy. But

seriously, Mr. Thielman, see what you can do to re-establish pleasant relations."

"I'll try, Dominie, I'll try, but Jan is a hard man to deal with."

"Thank you, Mr. Thielman," was the minister's cordial response.

During the weeks that followed Jan Harmdyk gave his neighbor no opening. He constantly avoided him and though their farms adjoined the two did not speak. When Jan was working in his corn and Klaas was in his wheat field across the fence, though there was only the space of a few feet between them, they did not exchange confidences about the state of the weather and they even resisted the temptation to discuss the superiority of the doctrine of the Christian Reformed church over that of the Reformed denomination in its attitude toward secret societies — a topic that ordinarily never failed of interest.

Although Klaas Thielman began to execute the task imposed upon him by the minister by nodding to Jan in the field, the latter made no attempt to answer it. He stared at his neighbor as though he was a being from another planet, spat into his hands and began to hoe with renewed vigor.

Though she had received no commission from the minister like Klaas Thielman, Nellie Harmdyk worked as hard as he to reestablish pleasant relations in the congregation. A few weeks ago she would not have lifted a finger for the good of the Christian Reformed church of Harlem. The crudities of the people had jarred upon her to such an extent that any sympathy

with her neighbors had been entirely out of the question. But now — it was all different now. Why had she never before felt the poetry of the Dutch psalms? Why had she not seen the essential features that distinguished the Hollander instead of seeing only his foibles and prejudices? There was an undeniable leaven of nobility in the characters of many of the sturdy farmers, although even in her changed attitude toward them she could not deny the truth of the other side of the picture — the side that had a few weeks ago blinded her completely to the nobler qualities of the people.

She tried desperately hard to reestablish amicable relations between her father and the minister. To resort to the arts of feminine tact and diplomacy was not easy for a girl of Nellie's independence of character, but she figuratively crawled in the dust before Jan and Ezra in her effort to bring about the desired result.

But the old man was not to be caught by this method. He respected force but despised the light touch and the soft-spoken word.

"Don't talk to me about it," he fairly snarled; "you may be mighty smart in books but you don't know nothing about drains — and not much about religion, I'm afraid."

But Nellie did not give up and her father looked at her curiously several times when she broached the subject.

"What's the matter with you?" he burst out, "talkin' in favor of them what took the bread out of

the mouth of your own father! What is that dog of a Klaas Thielman to you?"

"He is nothing to me," she said gently, "but he's your fellow church member, and it is very important that all the members, especially the officers, work together."

"Oh, is that so?" The question was an open sneer. "So it's the church what's botherin' you? Why, a few weeks ago you did n't even want to go to church. I hope you ain't goin' to throw yourself away on that good-for-nothing Dominie Van Weelen."

Nellie rushed from the room, a fierce anger suddenly flaring up in her heart that she could not control. Her dark eyes flashed and she clinched her capable fists.

Then she calmly sat down to think.

No, it was not *that*. Even though it was her own father who had made the insinuation, she could not forgive him *that*. Dominie Van Weelen was handsome—"noble lookin'," as she had often heard him described. He was educated, and broad-minded as well as high-minded. A girl, no matter what her rearing or culture, need not be ashamed of his friendship or of his—his—his—love. But—but—

"Oh, I despise the girl who is always calculating her matrimonial chances with every marriageable man she meets; and now to be accused in this way!"

She found plenty of excuse for her disinterested interest in the minister. He had taken the place of father and mother to her darling Baby Johannes.

She owed him gratitude for that. He had taken in Sarah Vissers when even the girl's own father had cast her off, and he had dared the tongue of gossip to do its worst for the sake of following in the footsteps of his Master where he thought they led. She owed him admiration for that. He had fired her imagination with his picture of the snow to be melted and freed from the shadows of the northern hillsides. Her æsthetic sense responded to the beauty of the thought.

"Why, of course, it stands to reason that I should be interested in the career of a man like that. But the people of Harlem can never imagine any other relationship between a man and a woman than the marriage state. They cannot conceive of mere mental companionship."

This comfortable reflection put her completely at ease.

"Besides, the chances are he is merely waiting till he can afford to go East and bring back somebody whom Harlem never heard of. I wonder — I wonder —"

Since this started a train of reflections that she did not dare utter out loud even to herself she felt more uneasy than before.

"I wonder," she repeated absently. Then she stepped up to the mirror and examined the reflection of her face critically.

That his daughter should champion the cause of his enemies only served to embitter the heart of Jan

Harmdyk. After making several unsuccessful attempts at returning to a neighborly footing Klaas Thielman was about to give up. One morning while crossing the Harmdyk pasture to reach his corn field he came upon Jan trying to put the halter on one of his horses. Klaas was prepared for nothing worse than a blank stare from his neighbor. When therefore he greeted him with the conciliatory remark, "Your crops are lookin' good," he was not prepared for the incoherent outbreak of rage that had been gathering for months.

"It's a dirty shame — a dirty shame — first take the water out of my farm and then poke fun at my crops. I tell you by — by — by —"

"I ain't pokin' no fun," objected Klaas, astonishment warring with resentment in his voice.

"You are too. Don't say another word or I'll forget myself." Jan raised the hand holding the halter with a threatening gesture.

This was too much for Klaas's habitual calm.

"Who ain't goin' to say another word?" he demanded.

Jan made another movement as if to strike but Klaas stood up to him squarely and said with affected calm,

"I won't shut up for nobody. I'll talk till the cows come home."

Jan set his mouth with a dangerous snap.

"Get off my farm, you stinkin' dog, or I'll put you off — and be in a hurry about it."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when he



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struck at Klaas. The struggle was a silent one and the horses and cows kept on grazing peacefully as the neighbors fought with hate in their eyes. They lurched back and forth in a plunging, dogged struggle until Klaas planted a blow on Jan's eye and another on his jaw with enough passion behind it to make the teeth rattle, daze his opponent, and end the fight.

Klaas, trembling in every inch of his great body, strode in silence across the field.

## CHAPTER XIV

### YOUTH AND BLACKBERRIES

“**I**T is about time for me to get a grip on myself,” said Dominie Van Weelen a few days after his speech at the drain.

He was sitting in his study trying to compose a sermon for the following Sunday. In the middle of a more or less abstruse sentence the hand that held the fountain pen was arrested by a thought far removed from theology —

Suppose those resolute dark eyes had been light blue, would they have been so very, very resolute? No, he did not want them to be light blue or brown or gray or any other color than the rich black that fairly flashed with very intensity. But there was no suggestion of yielding in them. There was strength — and — self-sufficiency.

“Yes, there’s the rub — self-sufficiency.”

And yet he would not have her a coquette. With a strong man’s natural instinct for straightforwardness he despised coquetry. No, he would not have her eyes yielding in that way. But a little softness, a little warmth —

“I take that back. They were soft — and — and — warm when she thanked me for taking care of Baby Johannes — yes, when she spoke of Baby Johannes.”

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He looked at the half-finished sentence: "Faith was the stronghold of the Old Testament heroes —"

"Let's see — 'Old Testament heroes' — 'Old Testament heroes' — Oh, yes, of course, 'Old Testament heroes, and — and — and' Besides, her hair matches her eyes so wonderfully. No, they could not be anything but black. I used to like light hair, but then —"

Looking down at the unfinished sentence again,

"'Old Testament heroes' — oh, yes, I got that far; what was I thinking about? — She is well built and — strong; can take care of herself, I'm sure. Yes, that's the trouble — that's the trouble —"

"'Faith was the stronghold of the Old Testament heroes and — and — love is the greatest thing in the world.' Professor Drummond said that, I believe; but it's out of place as far as this sermon is concerned." He pushed the manuscript impatiently away and walked to the window.

"I've got to get a grip on myself," he said; "here it's Friday noon and only one sermon half done."

But instead of going back to his sermon he walked to a little book-rack where his non-theological books were kept. His hand hovered lovingly over the volumes for a moment as a young girl picks out a choice chocolate from a box of bonbons. Finally deciding on a little padded volume of Burns he opened it at random.

"Now if I were a poet I suppose I'd find consolation like Bobbie Burns did in scribbling verses about her."

Turning to "Jean" the minister read a stanza.

"After all, how much more of a subject I'd have for a poem if I had the power of expression of this lovable and misguided Scotchman. There's Jean. She could n't for a minute compare with Nellie — A country girl; no education; no culture; and, what is worse, none of the backbone that Nellie has. A bit vulgar, according to prosaic biography; and yet — and yet — it is very beautiful, very beautiful."

He stood staring out the window for a while, his foot on the window sill, the book dangling limply from his hand.

"Meanwhile the really splendid women remain unsung for want of a singer — simply for want of a singer."

His eyes glistened for a moment with the ecstasy of some alluring thought and the book dropped to the floor. He started up as though from a dream.

"Oh, rot!" he said aloud; "you could n't write a poem any more than fly. Don't let me make a fool of myself."

Picking up the volume he replaced it on the shelf. Then he turned to his table and began to write rapidly as though trying to make up for lost time.

But it was only during half a dozen sentences that the "divine frenzy" remained upon him. Then the fountain pen again was poised aimlessly above the sheet.

By the inevitable process of suggestion the picture of little Mollie Warden back in Jersey came into his mind. How serious he had been about it! He

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was fourteen and Mollie was eleven and they had dreamed their beautiful dream. He was to be a carpenter and her highest ambition had been to become a carpenter's wife. And then there were others as the years went by — brief intimacies, unexpressed hopes, the inevitable discovery of the common clay clogging the beautiful dream — a swift disillusionment, a brief sorrow, and other baubles to chase and other gleams to follow.

And all this but the mists drifting over the deeper waters of mental and spiritual development underneath.

“Who has n't had his boyhood romances and who has n't been in love a number of times? ‘The Days of Real Sport,’ one cartoonist calls them — but that does n't help my sermon along.” And the pen once more began to race across the page as the dominie applied himself resolutely to his work.

If Dominie Van Weelen could at that moment have penetrated into the innermost recesses of Nellie's mind his sermon that week might have remained unfinished; or if not at that exact moment, at least during most of the girl's waking hours.

Nellie was in the habit of being at least fairly honest with herself. Since the June day in the woods before commencement she had often half regretfully thought of that infinitesimal moment of time, charged with the weight of a century of feeling, when Professor Matthewson and she had *almost* taken a sip of the wine of life — almost! He was interesting, cultured, passionately devoted to the things she was pas-

sionately devoted to. Why not at least mildly regret the passing of that dream?

But it was different now. When she tried half playfully to revive the sentiment of dim tenderness for the young professor, she found almost with consternation that there was no response — except a feeling of relief as for a danger escaped! There was a flatness about the old romance that made her start with the suddenness of the disillusionment.

Nellie was too honest to ignore the significance of the experience. And the admission brought with it its own delicious pain. After all, here she was, dreaming her dreams like a silly school girl. And then, there was the other girl. She started.

“Gracious goodness! I thought for a moment he had actually told me of another.”

Her imagination was beginning to play tricks. A mere imagined fear, by mental alchemy, the next minute became a certainty.

As she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror a delicious sense of conscious power took possession of her, only to turn to ashes the next moment at the thought that, from the very nature of the case, she could not deliberately exercise that power. To make a conquest, in the ordinary sense of the term, seemed too vulgar to be considered even for a moment.

Quite naturally Dominie Van Weelen and Nellie Harmdyk saw a great deal of one another. Put two young people with similarity of tastes and a certain equality of education and culture in a highly provincial community and the probable result is not hard

to guess. Add to all this a powerful physical attraction and the result is still less problematical. Her mental picture of him was described by the local phrase she could not forget — "noble lookin'." He thought of her in the first place as beautiful and talented — and — much else that could not be put in words.

And quite naturally the two avoided certain subjects — always coming close to them, like a moth nearly scorching its wings at the flame but escaping by the smallest possible margin. Because he delighted in piano music she took infinite delight in playing for him. He talked of his plans with a fervor he had never known before and she found them all beautiful beyond compare. She insisted on speaking lightly of her intellectual attainments, and he insisted just as strongly on considering her an authority on English literature and art and kindred subjects.

He religiously observed the local custom of hand shaking, both when he met her and when bidding farewell. When they held a two minutes' conversation on meeting accidentally about three-fourths of the time was often devoted to hand shaking.

"I suppose that's the Dutch of it," thought Nellie; but so illogical are the best of us sometimes, that her smile instead of being humorous, denoted genuine pleasure.

Now that they were intimately acquainted she often drew him out on what she called his "snow melting campaign."

"But is it your plan to stay in a small church always?"

"I have no definite plan. I am simply trying to find all the inspiration possible under present conditions."

"But after the snow here is melted?"

"It is not so easy as that; I may have gray hair by that time."

"Nonsense."

There was eternal youth in her picture of him.

"But there are many other hillsides that the sun has not yet reached."

"But do you expect to give your whole life to that kind of work?"

"Why not? A foreign missionary, for instance, does the same thing, and there are often men among them highly talented who could fill a large place in the political or commercial world or who could fill metropolitan pulpits."

"Yes, that's true."

Studying her closely for a moment, he said a bit nervously, "Would you like to have me try for a larger church?"

"No," doubtfully; "no — not if — that is, not if you don't feel called to it."

"It is n't that. I don't take much stock in that direct call talk we hear so much about. At least I for one have always had to depend on mental, or perhaps spiritual, inclination. And if you should wish it — that is, if it should give you pleasure — I mean, if you should —"



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He paused as though taking a mental grip on himself.

"No, I was wrong there. For some years to come at least I feel my work is here in the little half-forgotten communities. They grip me and I could n't get away from them even for that — even for that."

Nellie chose not to catch his meaning, and half fearful that she should, he hurried on:

"Do you know, the work of the church is not in the respectable city communities. The real work is in the slums and in the country. The other day I read of a university professor criticising the rural churches for being behind the times in their methods of saving the world; and he was right. That's the task, to change all that. The noted preacher in the metropolitan pulpit is not doing the greatest work of redemption. The thousands of respectable families along the boulevard flock to his church with here and there a humble worshiper. But those churches are not sending the missionaries who are changing the face of the Orient, and they are not doing the really effective things. Many of those people go to hear the famous preacher merely to be spiritually entertained. It is right here on the frontiers and in the slums that the cry is most piercing and where the possibilities for rich returns are the greatest. If I went to the city at all it would be to the slums."

Although he said it firmly, it was in the spirit of renunciation. This splendid flower to wither in the smoke and grime of the under-world or to be chilled

by the cold winds of frontier life — it was preposterous.

His farewell handshake was quick and vigorous. Instead of lingering over it he was gone before the girl could think of anything sensible to say.

But he came again and again — now wildly hopeful of accomplishing impossible feats, then again sober with the realization that after all he was but living in “the light of common day.” Harlem indulged in its exquisite bit of gossip and the young people, as young people will, each day became better friends, unmindful of the interest they were stirring up.

But in spite of growing intimacy Dominie Van Weelen definitely made up his mind that he could never even try to make this splendid creature share his hardships; and Nellie decided that her suspicion of the “other girl” was but too well founded.

Only the deepest darkness before the dawn!

Back of the corn-crib on the Harmdyk farm was an ancient blackberry patch that Nellie had tended years ago before going to college. Because she took an interest in it, Baby Johannes had carefully dug up the ground about the bushes that spring and had kept the patch free of grass and weeds, in anticipation of her home coming in June. Then they had tended the patch together and had tenderly cared for the bushes during early summer. As a result of their labor the large blackberries were once more ripening in the sun.

“Always wastin’ your time on something that don’t

bring you nothing," is the way Jan Harmdyk characterized the labors of his children.

Nellie was picking the first ripe berries of the season when the minister steered his bicycle into the Harmdyk yard. Standing it up against the barn he seemed to divine where the girl was, or had he caught a glimpse of her dress through the slits in the corn-crib?

A moment later there was eager laughter and chatter and hand-shaking and the eternal badinage of youth and hope.

Freely perspiring with the exertion of his ride along the rough country road the young minister took off his coat and deftly tossed it on the top rail of the fence. The muscles of his arms showed solid under his thin summer shirt. In all the months of his strenuous pastorate he had never looked less like a minister than now.

The girl's arms slightly browned by the sunshine were bare, and her face was suffused by a healthy red, deepened by the bending posture in picking the juicy berries.

The young man playfully held up an exceptionally large berry he had discovered, and, as Nellie nipped it from his fingers with her lips, the two laughed hilariously, as though they were engaged in the most interesting occupation in the world. The girl's eyes blinked in the summer sunshine, and as the minister saw the warm blood suffuse her cheeks, the dark eyes narrowing to mere slits to ward off the glaring light, the sweet face dimpled with merry

laughter, he felt irresistibly the stir of youth and summer time. Nellie's eyes also wandered over the stalwart form and solid muscles of the man, and in his face saw revealed the pure soul and high purpose and she too felt the stir that gives the world its glory of richest romance.

The minister pretended to be unable to quite reach the berry that the girl in her turn held up tantalizingly. She leaned over toward him, holding with one hand her skirts clear of the blackberry bushes. It was easy, though it seemed like taking an advantage, for the man to draw back his head when she was about to put the berry into his mouth. But it made her stumble and gave him an excuse for catching her in his arms. Her healthy young body was close against his own, the berry-stained lips just beyond his reach. She struggled tremblingly for a moment. He looked into her dark otherwise resolute eyes and they were soft and warm. Then she yielded her lips to his.

A short time later the bloody face and black eye of Jan Harmdyk came as a shock of disillusionment to the young lovers. A comic-tragic fate seemed to have placed the idyll and the sordid resort to brute force on the Harmdyk farm in a diabolical juxtaposition for the gods to enjoy.

In spite of his instinctive antipathy to the old man, Dominie Van Weelen beamed with sympathy; it was sufficient that Jan was Nellie's father. In the girl the nurse-instinct immediately asserted itself, and the lingering radiance of her dream-idyll added

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tenderness to the touch as she bandaged the eye and washed the blood off the old man's face.

"In spite of what she said," thought the minister watching the operation, "she deeply loves her father. How could she do anything but love, the splendid, womanly creature!" He tingled to the very fingertips with tenderness and sympathy.

To all the girl's tender inquiries as to the cause of her father's accident the old man merely made grunting replies of anger. If he had been given to profanity the sounds might have amounted to curses with hate to back them up. But since he was an elder of the church the hate found an outlet in sounds that were not so distinctly taboo.

"What can have happened? What *can* have happened?" The girl appealed to the minister when her father had left them and entered the house muttering.

"What do *you* think is the matter — Cha — Charles?" She blushed as she pronounced the name and the minister forgot about her father's accident long enough hastily to kiss her on the lips before the old man should return.

"How should I know?" It was a plain evasion by one who was not in the habit of evading things. He was beginning to learn the dilemma between absolute straightforwardness and giving pain to the woman he loved.

"I wonder whom he has been fighting with," he thought; "that black eye is a sure sign. I ought to know."

"Won't you stay to dinner?" she asked falling into the habit of rural hospitality but longing, too, to have him near.

"No, no, I must go home. I have been entirely too long. Still a whole sermon to write." Under the circumstances he knew the noonday meal would not be conducive to fostering the memory of the dream-idyll of the morning, and he wished that to stay with him as long as possible.

"I need no longer shake hands at parting, need I, Nellie?" he said smiling.

"No, I suppose not," and her eyes were radiant with happiness.

He took the substitute for the handshake that her reply gave permission for, jumped on his wheel and rode away. Nellie turned half regretfully into the house.

Fuming with rage hardly justified by the pain that his injured eye gave, Jan Harmdyk paced the floor. The dull thumping in his eye had changed to a sting and the discomfort of wearing a bandage over the injured member was great enough to warrant a few impatient remarks from any man. But the groans that escaped the stern old farmer were not chiefly groans of pain. He was too much of a stoic for that. The mortification of his defeat made him sick and miserable.

He raced about the kitchen, stopping now and again to touch gingerly the bandage that graced his eye. Then he would clinch his fists instinctively, and the expression on his face and the look in his free

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eye meant, "What a fool I was not to hit back that last time." Jan's oaths however were never expressed in words.

Suddenly a gleam of diabolical pleasure came into his eye, and seating himself in his armchair near the oven door, he left off groaning and fuming.

"There I've got him! There I've got him!" he said softly to himself. "He can't never get away from that."

Nellie, entering the kitchen, thought her father was becoming delirious.

"What is it, father," she said in a kindly tone.

"Nothing; don't bother me; I'm busy."

## CHAPTER XV

### WHERE LAWYERS ARE UNKNOWN

**O**CCASIONALLY a Harlem boy gave signs early in life of a desire to continue his studies beyond the fifth "reader." "Grades" had not yet been invented in the Harlem school district number 11. The word sometimes seeped through into the Harlem homes in connection with the city schools; but a "grade" was looked upon as a mysterious phenomenon that in part accounted for city boys being far behind country boys in point of scholarship. That such was the case was as unassailable a proposition as one of the Thirty-nine Articles.

Whenever a Harlem youth experienced those mysterious stirrings of something within him groping for light, commonly known as a thirst for knowledge, he had some slight chance of attaining his desire, provided he conformed to two laws that had in the minds of the people almost divine sanction. He must either promise outright to become a minister, or promise to make every possible endeavor to come to that decision. Secondly, he must never become a lawyer.

Occasionally a youth would rebel against this canon. Bolder than the others ambitious to learn, he would make the highly iconoclastic statement that



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there were at least some *good* lawyers; that it was not entirely inconceivable that an honest man and a lawyer should be the same person. Such a statement was almost sure to blight the youth's chances for a higher education. The parent was not likely to take a chance on having his son "learn for lawyer" if he could prevent it.

"But, father, Abraham Lincoln was a lawyer," the youth would say. It was his one strong card. But the answer was just as invariable:

"*Ja*, and he was shot in such a theater." To reconcile Lincoln's high character with the fact that he visited a theater was a problem that remained forever unsolved in the minds of the farmers of Harlem.

When therefore Jan Harmdyk and Klaas Thielman settled their differences by fistic combat in the Harmdyk pasture, the defeated combatant could not "go to law" in the ordinary sense. The nearest attorney held out in "De Stad" (The City), as the little town seven miles away was commonly referred to. He was a stranger and therefore not to be trusted. When Jan Harmdyk said, "I've got him," he did not refer to legal redress.

The church was his natural court of justice and to the church he directed his attention. There was a case on record in Harlem of a minister's wife having been tried by the church consistory on the charge of wearing skirts that did not come lower than her shoe-tops, and the *juffrouw* had actually been disciplined and made to conform to local custom. Many

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a case of mere gossip had been handled like a slander suit in a civil court with the verdict fully as binding.

Then why should not he, Jan Harmdyk, consistory member of the church, who had first been defrauded by his neighbors and later beaten by a fellow consistory member, take the same course and turn the sanction of the church against his enemy? He had what a prosecuting attorney would call a "sure case," with evidence which he thought could not be overthrown. "They can't never get away from that," is the way he expressed it in his own mind and he fully expected that the prisoner at the bar would merely plead guilty and submit to the humiliation of church censure.

Dominie Van Weelen's premonition that he would somehow become involved in the feud proved to be well founded. Soon after the noon hour Jan drove up to the parsonage on his "buck-board," a fresh bandage gracing his eye.

He plunged into business immediately.

"Two weeks from Sunday is communion, as you know, and my conscience won't let me partake of it till something is done about Klaas Thielman."

He said it with the judicial air of a justice reading a charge as a matter of form.

"Well, what do you propose should be done?" the minister asked with a composure he was far from feeling.

"Get him reconciled to me," said Jan shortly.

"Of course, of course." Dominie Van Weelen felt that it would be a great deal easier for him to give

one, or both, of the quarreling neighbors a sound trouncing than bring about any kind of spiritual reconciliation between them.

"You will be willing to meet him half way?"

"Meet him half way? Well — why — what do you mean?"

"Why, don't you think that neighbors, in a case of this kind, should bear and forbear?"

Dominie Van Weelen was feeling his way. He remembered that the man he was dealing with was Nellie's father.

"What? me? when he's beat me black and blue? Beg his pardon, did you say? I tell you he's a skunk, and I'll never open my mouth to him till he tells me he's in the wrong, and makes public confession. If you are worth your salt you'll take him to task and make him do the beggin'."

Dominie Van Weelen flushed at this reference to his pastoral ability. But controlling himself he said with a dignity to which even Jan Harmdyk could not help but respond for a moment.

"I'm your minister, Jan Harmdyk, but not a judge between you and your neighbor. I appreciate very deeply all the kindness I have experienced from your family, and I shall be sorry to have your ill will or to feel that there is to be any trouble in the congregation; but besides being a servant of God, and because I am his servant, I am a man who wants to see fair play, and I tell you right here that in refusing to make any concession in this quarrel you are not acting the part of a Christian."

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"I not a Christian! Who says I ain't a Christian?" Jan Harmdyk swallowed hard. "That's a lie — a wicked lie."

Dominie Van Weelen clinched his fists to control the twitching of the muscles in his arm, but he said almost solemnly,

"Jan Harmdyk, you don't know what you are saying. Man to man I would not let anybody say what you have just said to me; but I repeat that I stand before you as God's servant and I am trying to do his will. I cannot favor one member of my church above another. I do not know who is right in the controversy."

"What! You call me a liar?" snapped the farmer.

"No, but I have not heard Klaas Thielman's side of the case. Since you refuse to meet Klaas half way the matter can only be settled in consistory meeting. Whatever decision is reached in that meeting I shall expect both of you to abide by."

Jan protested vigorously. There could be no possible need in going to all that trouble. All that was necessary was for Dominie Van Weelen to call Klaas Thielman to account and bring him to a confession of his fault. Where a man was so palpably in the wrong it would be merely a waste of time to argue the matter. Klaas Thielman could enter nothing but a plea of guilty, as any unbiased man would admit.

"Nevertheless I'll hear his side of the case before proceeding," persisted the minister quietly.

"But I tell you he's in the wrong. If you can't

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take my word for it, me what's your own elder, look at this eye." He lifted the bandage and forced Dominie Van Weelen to inspect his blackened member.

The minister made no comment.

"Well, ain't that proof enough?" asked the farmer impatiently.

"You forget I have not seen Thielman. He may be blinded in both eyes!"

Dominie Van Weelen thought that a little humor might save the situation, but Jan Harmdyk was too deeply in earnest.

"I wish I could make you understand that I am not deciding against you," said the minister in a last attempt to make Jan take a judicial view of the case. "I am simply suspending my decision in the matter until I shall have had a chance to hear all the facts. When that time comes and I find that Klaas has been in the wrong I shall do my best to persuade him to acknowledge it. But I want you to understand this, that in case I find the fault lies with you or with both equally, I shall pursue the same course with you. That seems to me a fair proposition. Will you shake hands on that?"

Jan Harmdyk closed his right fist with a vigor that left no doubt as to his answer, and he put it behind his back out of reach of the outstretched hand of the minister.

"No," he snapped.

"Very well. Then it will be up to the full consistory. I shall call a special meeting for tomorrow

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evening. You can then present your case and so can Thielman."

Jan left the house without further argument. He muttered something about some people not having any backbone, and poured forth lamentations about a flock with such a shepherd.

With a great effort the minister controlled himself. The command of his physical being to give punishment for the insult tingled along every fiber of his strong right arm and sent electric thrills all over his body, making his eyes blaze. But he remembered in time that he had assumed the character of an impartial judge. Also, Jan Harmdyk was Nellie's father.

Dominie Van Weelen's state of mental perplexity was very uncomfortable for a man accustomed to straightforwardness. Was it after all the best policy, this cut-across to the goal without looking to left or right? Was it not part of a minister's business to use diplomacy and pacify his warring consistory members, even at the cost of a little self-respect? Did not the end, namely, a peaceful and united religious organization, justify playing a skillful instead of a straightforward hand?

Temptation came to him in another form. Klaas, he knew, was tractable. A few arguments urging the welfare of the congregation would bring him round. Dominie Van Weelen was fairly certain that Jan's adversary could be persuaded to apologize if the minister asked him to do so. There was a spirit of good nature about the slow, burly giant that would

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soon yield to the minister's entreaties, even though Klaas felt he was in the right. That would forestall the public consistory trial, a great deal of gossip, much trouble, and the breach would be patched up.

"That 's the trouble," he mused; "merely patched up — merely patched up."

Another thought struck him.

"And then Klaas Thielman; what right have I to make him sacrifice his self-respect? Why am I afraid to face the issue?"

The question made him extremely uncomfortable. Then the answer came popping out of space into his mind:

"Nellie!"

Yes, Nellie. After all, he did not know her very well. True, that morning his passion had swept him off his feet and he had offered her his all; and she, with what a divine grace had she yielded herself to him! The intoxication was still upon him and for a moment he inwardly raged against the fate that had broken in on his beautiful dream. Why should the unpleasant irritations come on the very day on which the maiden had yielded? Must he go on with it and endanger the love that seemed the one big thing in his life just now? Was it not his duty as a true man among men to steer his course by her wishes in the case?

The picture of her tenderly washing the blood off her father's face in the morning came back to him. The wonderful grace of each movement! The tenderness of the touch! The deep concern expressed

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in every line of her face! The soft look of kindly consideration in her dark eyes!

"I'd like to get hurt, just to have the pleasure of having her nurse me."

There must after all be a strong tie of filial love. Doubtless he had formed a misconception of her attitude toward her father. She had said something about her home life but — but he must have assumed too much.

"And if I understand anything at all of human nature Jan Harmdyk cannot help but get the worst of it in the trial. Klaas Thielman would never make an unprovoked attack."

Suddenly the blood mounted to his face and he felt genuinely ashamed. Here he was trying to dodge, he who had started with high resolve in his heart to make the Harlem community his own particular social settlement; he who had determined to cause the snow of rural prejudice to melt! Here he was yielding, the first time when his own feelings were concerned.

"I'll see Nellie," he said.

But he was irresolute — an uncomfortable experience for one of his nature. One moment it seemed unmanly to worry her with his troubles; the next minute he was sure he had to go, whether it was manly or not. A few hours ago he had held her in his arms and had seemed sated with happiness. But already the hunger had returned and it was sharper than ever. He must see her. He hungered for the flash of her dark eyes, for the smile that he



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had seen in the moment of her surrender. The blood raced through his veins with the mere physical desire to touch her and hold her and see her and envelop her. It was not her mental elevation that irresistibly drew him now. No healthy man, he felt, ever really falls in love with mental elevation; it may first attract his attention and may help by allowing the man's self-respect to abandon itself to the elemental passion. But the real call is the call of blood, the chirp of the robin to its mate, the passion that cannot live in the rarified air of intellectuality.

Dominie Van Weelen was too honest to pretend either to himself or to others that by virtue of his high office his passion was more highly spiritualized than that of other men. Instinctively he gloried in the elemental nature of his love. His body to him was a real temple; why should he be ashamed of it? Some men might think it necessary to be governed by lap-dog standards, but as he shot his clinched fist into space he felt the satisfaction that a prize fighter feels in training camp when he lets out his power with mathematical control.

"I'm not a lap-dog society woman," he said. It was a boast such as even modest men often make to themselves when no one can hear.

Nellie did not learn that her father had been hurt in a fist fight until he returned from the minister's.

"Just as I told 'em right along," he muttered to himself, half to his daughter, "he's a good-for-nothing."

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"Who is?" The eyes flashed in defensive anger — the she-bird ruffling her feathers in defense of the newly made nest.

"Dominie."

"Why?" The gleam was dangerous.

"I been just to the parsonage."

"Well?" Like the snap of a whip.

"He ain't got no backbone; is afraid of Klaas Thielman."

"What have you got to do with Klaas Thielman?" The question was a command and Jan began to feel uneasy.

"Do you think I'm goin' to let him hit me black and blue and then beg his pardon? Dominie Van Weelen is crazy."

Nellie looked at the bandage with complete comprehension now.

Bit by bit she drew from her father the story of the fight in the meadow. As the details multiplied she began to see more clearly that the consequences would be serious. For many years she had studied her father with the keen unconscious analysis that children sometimes apply to their parents, and she knew that he would stop at nothing to gain his point.

And the gaining of his point would involve the minister. This became increasingly clear as the old man continued his story. Dominie Van Weelen had been chosen by the congregation against his advice; hence, *a priori*, Dominie Van Weelen was bound to be a failure. Dominie Van Weelen had not agreed with him, Jan Harmdyk, in this controversy, proving

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that he, Jan Harmdyk, had been justified when he voted against him in the first place; his refusal to agree with Jan unreservedly was indisputable evidence of the soundness of the farmer's judgment in his opposition and warranted his continued attitude of hostility.

Nellie was more concerned about her lover's career now than she had at one time been about her own. Though only that morning the great message had come to her, it was some time since she had merged her ambitions in his. English literature seemed a very small thing to devote a life to after the minister set her imagination afire with the glory of redeeming the "slums of the country." Even if the insidious hope, unexpressed even to herself, had not constantly insinuated itself into her dreams, she kept telling herself that to do the work he was doing would be more exciting than to enquire into the psychology of the Romantic Movement. But the hope was there — buried deep under the layers of common sense — the exquisite psycho-physical pain of longing — the pain that finds its fulfillment in the birth throes, and that culminates in the glory of motherhood.

And then came the unuttered confession, the flash of passion in the eye, the swift kiss on the lips. She put her hand up to her neck where his arm had encircled it in the morning, and touched it lovingly, almost reverently. The delicious haze of the dream-world in which the embrace of the morning had enveloped her would not be dispelled in spite of the grim reality impersonated by her father; and the

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vision of a home — a real home — already held a large place in her dreams.

“I’ll go to Nellie,” the man had said.

“I wish he would come,” was all the woman could say.

Meanwhile she could do no better than return to his defense. A quarrel among the consistory members of his church would jeopardize his career at the very start. He could earn more money in the large city church, she was sure, but his picture of the melting of the snow on the northern hillsides had completely taken possession of her. To her excited imagination it seemed that failure in this would be disaster.

“But if Klaas Thielman attacked you, why not see a lawyer about it? That’s the way an assault and battery case should be handled. It is not a minister’s business to adjust it, and trouble may be started in the church.”

In this very statement, she felt with a touch of pride, she was attempting to melt a little of the snow. She was beginning to prove herself worthy to be *his* mate.

“A *lawyer?* a lawyer! Well! well! you dare tell me to go see a lawyer! you what have been brought up as a Christian!”

“Well, what of it?” The tone was a challenge. Nellie knew perfectly well what her father’s objections to the employment of a lawyer were, but she could not help disturbing his prejudices.

“What of it? You ask what of it? Lawyers

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ain't fit to mix up in the affairs of Christians, and you know it."

"I know no such thing." Her voice rang out clear cut and challenging. "And what is more, I think it is all simply ignorant prejudice."

Jan Harmdyk stood facing her in wide-eyed amazement. A daughter of his, whom he had painstakingly taught years ago with his own mouth to repeat the answer to the question in the Heidelberg Catechism, "What is thine only comfort in life and in death?" who had listened to two long sermons every Sunday, who had heard the Bible read through some two dozen times in her life — that such a daughter could give expression to such a view took his speech away. Finally he grunted, for want of anything else to say,

"*Hunn! hunn!* so that's what they learn you in such a college?"

Nellie saw immediately that she had made a mistake. Instead of conciliating her irate father and scoring in the minister's favor, she had merely aroused the old man's prejudices the more and she had gained nothing for Dominie Van Weelen. When the old man left her the tears came into her eyes. After all, she had proved herself a very unworthy mate in the minister's great work.

As for Jan Harmdyk, his uneasiness increased as the day wore away. Gradually he became conscious of an unuttered wish that he had not called on the minister that afternoon. Although unable to consult a lawyer, he thought he might have adjusted

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the trouble some other way if he had only given himself time to think. A possible splitting up of the congregation might mean a loss of the dignity of elder for him. But how was he to know that the minister would be so obstinate? He was trying to induce a new-born calf to drink that did not take naturally to the milk, and Jan had to force his fingers into its mouth and make it suck them. By gradually removing them he hoped to deceive the calf into continuing its sucking and to induce it to take in the milk by this means.

But the animal was obstinate. When the fingers were removed the sucking ceased. Jan tried two or three times but with no better success. Suddenly, losing control of himself, he raised the pail of milk above his head and hurled it at the animal with a force that bent the pail unrecognizably out of shape. The calf blinked and strained at its rope with an impotent snort, the milk streaming down its gawky body.

"*Daar, je verdoemde beest, daar!*" shouted the infuriated farmer.

Then he nearly collapsed as from a blow.

It was the first time Jan Harmdyk had used the Dutch equivalent for "damn" since he was a young man!

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE TRIAL

**W**HEN Jan Harmdyk saw Dominie Van Weelen riding his wheel to the house, as the twilight was deepening that evening, his first thought was that the minister had reconsidered his decision and had come to make terms.

"Let him come to the barn," he said closing the stable door. "I ain't goin' to run after him." There was the exhilaration of triumph in his voice.

He puttered about the stable for a while, added some unnecessary straw to the bedding of the horses, just to appear to be doing something when the minister should step in, found a new rope for the calf and tied it on with elaborate care, and tested the hay for mold. Thus he succeeded in keeping up an appearance of work for about an hour. It was now totally dark, but no minister had appeared. Unable to keep up the pretense any longer Jan strode across the graveled yard to the house. He entered the kitchen with the bustle and noise of an extremely busy man.

The house was deserted.

Without a word he went to his bedroom. After viciously kicking his heavy shoes into a corner of the room, he knelt down and pronounced a long prayer

in a deep bass voice. A few minutes later he was in bed looking sternly into the darkness, all unconscious of the thousand twilight voices that gradually lulled nature to sleep.

For Nellie and the minister these twilight voices formed a natural accompaniment to the unheard harmonies that thrilled them. They were in the minister's canoe, softly gliding over the water. The oppressive heat of the day had yielded to a light evening breeze, and as the hazy twilight gradually yielded to the shadows, the stillness seemed to become more pronounced. The harshness died out of the world and the dip of the paddle could be heard more and more distinctly as the canoe proceeded on its way. A soothing calm fell upon the landscape that could not help but powerfully affect the young people in the canoe. The girl allowed her hand to drag along in the cool water, and as the darkness became more pronounced, the minister kept his eyes fixed on a tall pine to steer his course by it. Only the incessant chirp of the crickets was heard in the marshes.

"The moon will rise in a few minutes," said the minister.

"Yes, I can see the edge of the rim," said the girl.

The words of each were charged with a tenderness that their meaning did not at all warrant.

It is a strange thing, this recoiling from a subject that is uppermost in the mind. Nellie was anxious to discuss her father with the minister and Dominie



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Van Weelen was just as anxious to ask her advice on the same subject. But the minutes slipped by and the lovers talked about every conceivable subject but that.

"As soon as we get to the bend on this side of the swimming hole, I'll start it," said the minister to himself. The bend came. The canoe glided gracefully around it. He opened his mouth in sheer desperation to start the unwelcome subject, but remarked instead,

"Does n't the moon seem abnormally large, when so near the horizon?"

"Yes," she said tremulously, "it's beautiful."

"Now I'll count a hundred and then begin," thought the girl. She counted a hundred very slowly. "I'll make it twenty-five more" — "might as well make it a hundred and fifty" — Then with a mighty effort she began,

"Charles, I — tell me — don't you think — that — that it's about time to turn back?"

Straightway she despised herself for cowardice.

It seemed a pity that their dream should be broken in upon. Why not let this old world drift along and let enough for the day be the evil thereof? Why not thoughtlessly listen to the song of the cricket and hear the water gently chugging against the canoe?

"I'll take you up to your father's farm in the canoe," he said; "then we can cross the pasture to your home."

They sat down to rest under a huge elm, their

faces with the instinct of youth toward the east and the ascending moon.

"Your father was at the parsonage this afternoon," he broke out abruptly.

"Yes, I know; what did he say?"

The minister left many of the harsh lines out of the picture in narrating the conversation of the afternoon.

"It is the only way left for the settling of the dispute," he summarized.

"But can't you keep out of it altogether?"

"I don't see how if they insist on dragging me in."

"Why not a law-suit in a civil court?"

"It should be handled that way, but prejudice is prejudice, and the situation must be coped with now."

The girl was silent for a while. The minister must somehow be saved from being mixed up in the quarrel.

"That's the Dutch of it, dear," he said banteringly.

"Don't, Charles, don't joke about it."

They fell into silence again. She was thinking, thinking. How could she save him from having his work spoiled? A split in the congregation seemed inevitable, no matter in what way the case should be decided.

"How stupid I was not to see from the beginning that she really thinks a great deal of her father," he thought. His resolution to see the matter through

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on its merits wavered and he had not the courage to ask her advice outright.

“A consistory trial is the only way?”

“I can think of no other.”

There was silence as they strolled toward the girl's house. Somehow Dominie Van Weelen felt a coolness between them, he hardly knew why. He was uneasy, and the hours with Nellie that he had eagerly looked forward to during the day, seemed to have lost much of their glamour. The thought of the afternoon made him savage. Must he sacrifice his happiness to the prejudice of ignorant farmers? The melting of the snow in actual operation did not possess the poetic qualities that it had seemed to have when he planned the work.

When Nellie said good night and turned into the house she put two long white arms about his neck and for a delicious moment both forgot their troubles.

“You will be very careful — and — and — gentle, dear, at the trial.”

“Yes, yes, oh, yes,” he said eagerly. He gently disengaged the soft, white arms, kissed the upturned face, and strode into the moonlight.

The farm of Dirk Stormzand was the scene of lively activity. In the house Mrs. Stormzand and two daughters of her own, as well as two from a neighboring farm, were busily engaged in baking cakes, biscuits, apple pies and other good things.

Every few minutes the women looked anxiously at the loud-ticking clock on the wall, and as the hour

of nine approached their nervousness increased. There was in their faces the haunting fear that everything would not be ready when the sound of the shrill traction engine whistle should give the signal for the threshers in the barn to come forth from the dust and heat and satisfy the inner man with the ceremony of "*koffie drinken*." This did not consist merely in the sipping of a cup of coffee. There were several kinds of cake, hot biscuits, pies, fruits, canned and fresh, and in fact everything that goes to make a threshing dinner with the exception of meat and potatoes. The elaborateness of the "coffee time" was the housewife's badge of honor.

The whistle gave the signal; the engineer reversed the lever; the velocity of the long belt connecting the engine with the separator in the barn lessened; the bundle pitchers ceased handing sheaves to the feeders on the platform; the cylinders began to show their myriad steel teeth; the groaning of the wheat straw between the numerous wheels in the mechanism became fainter and fainter, and finally ceased as the whole came to a gradual stop.

Faces streaming with perspiration, jackets covered with dust and chaff, eyes blinking because of the sudden change from the obscurity of the barn to the sunshine, the threshers came forth. The very eyebrows and lashes of the "straw-men" were covered with the fine straw dust. Nor were the men in a hurry to remove it. There is something exciting about a threshing job. It is a variation from dull routine. The thresher is doing something that almost dis-

tinguishes him, and the thicker the dust on his eye brows and on his jacket the keener the feeling of exaltation. Most of the men sat down at the table without making an effort to cleanse themselves.

But threshing jobs were all the more welcome to the Harlem farmers this summer because the completion of the drain had left a void in their lives hard to be filled. Many of them had day after day hankered for the diverting discussions that had seemed to lighten the work on that memorable job.

Ezra Harndyk left the table earlier than most of the others. There was a certain sullenness about the bullying young fellow that did not escape the notice of his neighbors.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Wilm Nederveld. "He looks so black—is gettin' just like his father."

"What do you mean by his gettin' just like his father?" asked a "sand" farmer challengingly. Because of the character of the soil on his farm he sympathized with Jan's attitude on the drain.

"I mean he looks as black as a thunder-cloud," said Wilm.

"Jan will look blacker still, at least in one eye, when the bandage comes off," volunteered someone.

"What bandage?"

"Ain't you heard? Ain't you seen Jan today or yesterday?"

"No we ain't," cried several, "let's hear."

The story of the fight in the meadow and the visit of Jan Harndyk to the minister furnished a

juicy morsel during the remainder of the meal. Because of it the cylinders in the separator in the barn did not begin to revolve as soon as they would otherwise have done.

However, when only a few minutes after the work had been resumed the belt broke, the threshers welcomed the interruption with eager signs of relief. It would take some time to make repairs, and the theme was still full of rich possibilities. The "straw-men" came over to the "bundle-men," and the "feeder" and "twine-cutter" sat down on their platforms facing them.

"I can't blame Jan Harmdyk much," said the "feeder." "He ain't been used right, I'm thinkin'."

"Why ain't he?" challenged one of the "bundle-men."

"They been pickin' on him all summer; you know they have, and Klaas Thielman had no business hittin' him."

"Jan hit first."

"Who told you that?"

"Klaas."

"Just as I thought. No wonder Klaas says that. And you are simple enough to believe it just because Klaas says so. You helped in this ditch, and everything Klaas says is gospel with you."

"Well, what proof have you got it ain't so?" challenged the other.

"I heard say Klaas started the whole thing," answered the "feeder" unabashed.

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"Heard say! Anybody can get out of a thing in that way. That ain't proof."

"Just as good proof as what Klaas says."

The "bundle-man" was silenced for a moment.

"Well, Dominie Van Weelen will settle that."

"Dominie Van Weelen? What should he know about it?"

"Ain't you heard? They're goin' to have a consistory meeting about it."

"*Heden! heden!*" exclaimed several of the "straw" and "bundle-men."

"Well, if Dominie Van Weelen knows what he's about he won't monkey with Jan Harmdyk, that's all I can say," declared the "feeder."

"And all I can say," said the "bundle-man" doggedly, "is that if he sticks up for Jan there's goin' to be trouble."

The discussion waxed hotter as the partisans of the two principals of the dispute became more definitely aligned. Soon the "seed-man," attracted by the noisy tones of the disputants, climbed upon the platform to take part in the conversation. One man vehemently championed Klaas Thielman's cause and declared in loud tones that he had been deeply wronged; another held forth just as loudly on the theme that Jan was the wronged person. A few members of the Reformed church smiled indulgently as their Christian Reformed brethren argued and called each other names. They were human enough rather to enjoy the spectacle of civil war in the ranks of their religious rivals in the community.

"It's wrong of a minister to let it come to a consistency trial," said the "feeder," who seemed to assume that Dominie Van Weelen would favor Klaas Thielman in the dispute; "it ain't right."

"That's just like you — talkin' about something that you don't know nothing about. That's the very thing the minister wanted to do, but Jan would n't meet Klaas half way."

"And I don't blame him," said the "feeder," "after he'd nearly killed him."

"But Jan hit first and got what was comin' to him."

"But I say he did n't hit first and I know it. Dominie Van Weelen is afraid to go against Klaas Thielman, that's what's the matter."

"Never you mind Dominie Van Weelen," shouted the "bundle-man," "he's got more grit than some people I could name."

The discussion was beginning to be personal and might have resulted disastrously if at this moment Dirk Stormzand had not come along with a milking-bucket full of beer, and a glass. By the time the men had done justice to this the belt had been repaired and the shrill shriek of the whistle announced that work would be resumed.

At half-past seven o'clock that evening all were in their places. Jan Harmdyk, with the bandage still gracing his brow and wearing the aspect of an avenging angel, occupied a Morris chair in the minister's little parlor where the trial was being held.



From the other side of the room Klaas Thielman glared at him, and between these two sat the jury of two consistory members and the minister as chairman.

The similarity between this trial and a trial in a civil court broke down at many points. Dominie Van Weelen, though taking the place of judge, was unable to make formal rulings on the testimony. He was interrupted, his words were disputed or disregarded and passion held full sway. The usual deference of the people toward a minister was all but forgotten in the heat of passionate personal debate. The jury, Hendrick Slotman and Gysbert Vissers, the two consistory members not on trial, did not preserve the stolid silence of a civil jury. They mixed freely in the debate and took sides almost from the start. The defendants acted as their own attorneys and a hit-or-miss, free-for-all dispute took the place of the usual examination and cross examination.

Moreover it was understood that if the jury should disagree it could not be dismissed. The consistory represented the church's authority — the visible authority of God on earth. In cases of great importance there could be an appeal to the classis and general synod. In all other cases the minister — the judge — was supposed to break a tie vote.

The discussion waxed hot from the very start, and Dominie Van Weelen tried in vain to instill at least a semblance of parliamentary procedure into the trial. Human nature, with its weakness and

prejudice, early asserted itself, and the jury and defendants would brook no formal rules of debate. Hendrick Slotman was very much in sympathy with the draining of the bottom lands. He had signed the petition and had helped to dig the ditch. The contentions of Klaas Thielman therefore seemed very just to him. On the other hand, Gysbert Visser, since his conversion to Jan's point of view in regard to the drain, took the opposite view just as naturally.

The struggle developed into a battle of prejudice against prejudice, and feeling ran high. The actual assault was often lost sight of, and the "trial" developed into a seemingly interminable wrangle over minor issues.

Dominie Van Weelen brought the men back to the question with a bang on the table that nearly broke the skin on his knuckles.

"I *was* talking on the question," shouted Jan Harmdyk angrily. "What do you know about it? You was n't there."

"*Ja*, let's talk on the question," said Hendrick Slotman in a more conciliatory tone.

"Well, then, don't stick up for Klaas Thielman all the time," snapped Gysbert Visser, who for once had been shaken out of his attitude of agreement with the latest speaker.

"I ain't stickin' up for nobody; but you — everybody knows how you're goin' to vote. Talk about stickin' up! I'd like to know why I can't stick up for somebody as well as you?" The usual mild

demeanor of Hendrick Slotman was also lost in the heat of the altercation.

"I tell you, he hit me black and blue, he hit me black and blue." It was the burden of Jan Harmdyk's wail. "You can't get around that, that's one sure thing, you can't get around that."

"Hum!" The sound Hendrick Slotman made was almost a sneer. "Klaas could put a rag around his head too, if he was so minded."

"What! You mean to call me a liar and that to my face?"

Jan's brow darkened and his own words seemed to increase his wrath. With a bound he was across the room and his fist was within an inch of Hendrick's face.

"Take that back, I tell you, take that back!" he roared, "or I'll make it so as you'll have to wear a bandage over both eyes."

Dominie Van Weelen jumped in between the combatants before Hendrick could rise from his chair to ward off the attack. Taking Jan's outstretched arm in a firm grip he made the wiry old man wince and forced him back into his chair.

"Mr. Slotman," said the minister, "that was an unfair insinuation. I saw the blood on his face myself."

"Yes," admitted Klaas Thielman, "I did hurt him."

Although Hendrick Slotman did not take back his words the incident was allowed to drop.

"There you have it," broke in Jan Harmdyk;

"there you have it — says himself as he hit me black and blue."

Klaas Thielman ignored the jury and appealed directly to the minister:

"What would you do if anyone hit you first?"

Dominie Van Weelen did not answer, but a creepy sensation in the delicate muscles of his fists sent an electric thrill along his arms.

"Well?" said Gysbert Visser.

Jan Harmdyk saved the minister from making a reply.

"Hit you first did I? I know I hit first. Who would n't hit when he's insulted on his own farm?"

"That's what I say," declared Gysbert Visser. "Jan can't be expected to put up with everything."

"And I tell you," cried Hendrick Slotman hotly, "that he ain't got no business to be hittin' first. What did he put up with, is what I'd like to know. Just because he was too stubborn to join in in digging the drain and just because you were so soft-headed as to be talked over by him you say he had to put up with a lot."

Once more banging the table, the minister reminded the speakers that they must stick to the question. The debate continued and the inevitable wanderings into side issues also continued.

Dominie Van Weelen rapped loudly for order. Seeing the fruitlessness of further debate and anticipating the outcome, he had determined to make a final attempt at reconciliation.

"As well as I can make out," he said with pur-

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poseful deliberation, "there is some blame on both sides. My suggestion is that we stop this wrangling, that Klaas Thielman and Jan Harmdyk freely forgive one another and shake hands like brothers. We must forgive as we wish to be forgiven."

"I 'm willin'," said Klaas Thielman hesitatingly.

All eyes were turned to Jan Harmdyk but the sternness in his dark face did not relax.

"Well?" said the minister, addressing the motionless farmer.

"I tell you, he 's guilty," said Jan doggedly, "and no one except one what has n't got no backbone would let a guilty man escape."

Again clinching his fist involuntarily Dominie Van Weelen repressed a desire to plant it forcibly in the unbandaged eye of the speaker.

The wrangling began once more, and all the old, much discussed side issues were once more dragged in and gone over till everyone present was thoroughly familiar with them and could anticipate every phrase that would be employed at each stage of the argument.

After several unsuccessful attempts Dominie Van Weelen finally succeeded in calling the matter to a vote. Everyone knew the outcome and although there were only two jury members a ballot was insisted upon.

"Remember, brothers," said the minister, in a futile attempt to impress upon the consistory members the significance of what they were doing, "remember that what you shall bind on earth shall be

bound in heaven, and what you shall unbind here shall be loosed there."

After offering a short prayer, which sounded extremely incongruous after the wrangle of quarreling voices, he passed the ballots.

The vote stood one and one. Nothing had been either bound or loosed on earth or in heaven.

The quarreling recommenced but the minister called a halt.

"Not a word. The case is over." For a moment the men were cowed into silence.

All eyes were turned on the minister. With him rested the decision.

Before him yawned the split in the congregation — a very serious matter for a minister in his first charge. Decide against Jan Harmdyk and the break would be inevitable.

Moreover, Jan was Nellie's father. Dominie Van Weelen could still feel the warm pressure of her lips on his. The glory of the look in her eyes when she bade him good night still lingered with him.

Then suddenly the picture of the girl tenderly wiping the blood off the old man's face stood out before him. The touch — the look — they told of a boundless filial love that was unmistakable. What would she think if he should decide against her father?

On the other hand, there was possible escape if he should yield to the stern old man's prejudices. Though of a violent temper Klaas Thielman was incapable of nurturing long continued resentment. His friendship for the young minister would cause

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him soon to forget the affront, and the trouble would blow over after a little.

“What would you do if someone hit you first?”

The words seemed to shout themselves into the minister's ears and they burned themselves on his brain. He clinched his hands with an involuntary twitch.

Slowly and with a deliberation that belied the furious beating of his heart he looked full at the expectant group of consistory members and said,

“No man is guilty of a crime who simply defends himself. A Christian, like all American citizens, has the right to strike when he is attacked.”

Klaas Thielman held out his hand and the minister grasped it wearily. Leading the farmer to the place where Jan Harmdyk was sitting he extended the hand to him. Jan ignored it and reached for his hat. Walking across the room without a word he passed out the little square entry, slamming the door as he went.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SECESSION

“**I** AM going to church this morning,” said Nellie at the breakfast table.

Jan Harmdyk looked at his daughter for a moment in wide-eyed amazement. Nellie had not been in the habit of attending church in the forenoon. In fact, before she had met Dominic Van Weelen she had, to her father’s loudly expressed sorrow, seldom attended at all. Why now this sudden determination on the part of the girl to go?

It was the first Sunday after the trial. A shadow of suspicion crossed the old man’s face.

“You go to church. What church?”

“Why, to our church, of course.” Nellie tried to appear natural and unconcerned. But in spite of herself she felt a slight flush overspread her face.

Jan Harmdyk mentally calculated the chance of persuading her to stay at home. Why should she go this morning of all mornings? The unreasonableness of it suddenly stirred up the old man’s anger.

“What for do you want to go to church this morning?” he demanded sternly.

“To hear the sermon, of course.” Nellie flushed at the peremptory demand as to her motives, and it was with difficulty that she repressed a different re-



ply. The fact that the answer was not strictly true did not occur to her. That there could be a hunger in her heart to be near the minister and hear his voice the old man very naturally could not know. She needed spiritual consolation, but it was not exactly the kind implied in the words that formed her answer.

"*Huh*," was Jan's answer, "to hear that hypocrite what ain't got no backbone."

His impulse was to give a direct command that she stay at home; but he had learned by experience during the summer that that was not the best way to gain his point.

An angry red overspread the girl's face and the eyes for a moment flashed fire. But she remembered in time that she was trying to help prevent a split in the congregation if possible.

"Him what has been against your father all summer," the old man continued in an injured tone.

"You are mistaken there," said Nellie gently.

"What! you stick up for him, and that my own daughter — you!"

"Yes, I'll take his part when I know he's right." She was still succeeding in repressing the hot words that involuntarily leaped to her lips.

"Right!" the old man thundered, "right!"

The hired girl who had taken Sarah Vissers' place was shaken with fear mingled with admiration for Nellie because of her apparent equanimity.

"Right! Do you call me, your own father, a liar?"

"Not necessarily. I am merely forming my own opinion about this case."

"Your own opinion! *huh*, your own opinion! That's what a man gets what spends his money and sends his children to college. They turn against him and call him a liar and a cheat, and pretty soon it will be a murderer."

"You are wrong there, father," she said gently, still trying to turn away his wrath if possible. "You are worked up about this matter now, but you will see it in a different light later when you and the minister and Klaas Thielman shall have patched things up."

"Patched it up! What do you mean — patch up? I tell you it ain't goin' to be patched up. Remember that, it ain't goin' to be patched up."

He seemed unreasonably surprised when in spite of his protests he saw Nellie preparing for church. Two or three times he was on the point of forbidding her to leave the house. But there was something in the calm assurance of the girl that made him desist. He recognized in his educated daughter a force that he could not help but respect, all the more so because he instinctively felt that it was a direct inheritance from himself; but in her the independent single-mindedness that marked his own character was softened and glorified by the childlike kindness which had attracted people to her soft-spoken mother.

Entering the church was considerable of an ordeal for Nellie. For several weeks during the beginning

of the summer her failure to comply with the religious customs of Harlem had formed almost the sole topic of conversation in the community. Old men had shaken their white heads about her, and farmers' wives had solemnly discussed the subject over their afternoon tea. They always ended with a pious hope that the child of religious parents like Mr. and Mrs. Jan Harmdyk would eventually be saved.

Aware of the comment she was exciting Nellie had proudly ignored it. What was the opinion of Harlem to her—to her who was looking forward to a period of investigation into the psychology of the Romantic Movement?

But since then she had been gripped by the glorious idealism of the minister; she had been steeped in the attar of romance which made the Romantic Movement seem as uninteresting as a Greek dictionary. And lo, the opinion of the people of Harlem began to count, and count mightily.

The people would search for a motive for her appearance in church; there was no doubt about that. And they would discuss it very freely; that also was very certain. She remembered how in her girlhood the appearance and slightest action of every member of the flock had been subjected to the closest scrutiny every Sunday and had furnished material for discussion at the dinner table. Mrs. Stuit for twenty years had occupied a pew on the left side of the aisle. When one Sunday she took a seat on the right side it created quite a sensation and

furnished talk that noon at two dozen dinner tables. Miss Rickman one Sunday had defied local custom by taking her coat off during services. The heat in the building was so oppressive that she could not resist the temptation; but a few minutes later as she felt all eyes upon her, the blood surging into her face made her feel more uncomfortable than three coats would have done. She too had furnished a rich theme at various tables that noon.

As Nellie had anticipated, she was the target of numerous eyes. Timidly walking up the aisle she found a seat in the third pew from the back. It was considered unmaidenly in the Harlem Christian Reformed Church for a girl to sit as far towards the back as that, in the pews usually occupied by the "bad boys," and instantly everyone in the building was condemning Nellie.

The girl's impulse was to get up and take another seat; but that would have been more iconoclastic still. No one ever stirred an inch from the place first chosen, and Nellie was shamed into observing the local custom. But she hated herself for her cowardice.

There was no spiritual edification for Nellie Harmdyk in the services that morning. She could not concentrate her mind on the sermon. But the voice of the minister was balm to her lacerated feelings—the same rich tones, the same indescribable quality that had thrilled her before.

Would he come and speak to her at the close of the meeting? Why, certainly, he could not help but

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come. But — she did not dare ask him to walk home with her. The relations between the minister and her father were strained enough as it was. Nothing could be gained by defying the lightning. And Nellie was still hopeful of affecting a reconciliation in some mysterious way.

This was her problem and it persisted in popping back into her mind during the sermon — how was she to prevent a meeting between the minister and her father for the present? Dominie Van Weelen, she felt sure, would insist on coming along. He was not the man to be frightened by the black look of a father — but he must not come. On that seemed at the moment to depend her fate. He must not come. Several times she caught her breath with a start, as at a danger avoided. How to prevent it. Why had she come at all?

But the answer to this question was immediate and final: she could not have stayed away.

“I’m like a silly school girl excited about her first love affair,” she thought. But she did not care. Why not be silly, if only happy?

The eyes of the minister avoided her during the sermon. Once or twice he seemed to wander a little in his argument and Dirk Stormzand immediately noticed there was something wrong.

“It’s orthodox all right,” was his mental comment, “but he ain’t quite so logical as he is otherwise.”

“He’ll come up to me after the service is over,” thought Nellie. She looked at the clock. It must

be wrong; he had been preaching only fifteen minutes and the sermon would last at least fifty.

"I'm afraid I'd make a very poor minister's wife," she thought and she blushed as though the thought had been uttered.

The minutes dragged but the sermon came to an end at last. There was an impressive moment just before the benediction after the last psalm had been labored through. The minister looked full into the faces of his expectant congregation and said in the dispassionate tone in which he might have announced the number of a psalm,

"Elder Harmdyk has severed his connection with this church."

Although this simple statement represented so big a sensation for the people of the church that it would occupy a four column "head" in that intangible newspaper, the gossip of the community, no one in the church gave a sign that anything unusual had happened. Nellie was the only one who seemed affected. She turned white for a moment and her knees suddenly felt weak.

The members of the congregation stood with bowed heads reverently accepting the benediction which the minister invoked upon them in a voice that did not show the slightest sign of emotion. Nellie could not know that he had practiced this difficult part several dozens of times in his room, that he might make as good a showing of dignity as possible. That the resignation of his elder would mean months of trouble for him and his church he knew full well; that it

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might mean the wreck of his work in this community was also a probability. But he had taken his action with a clear conscience and there would be nothing gained by showing the white feather now.

The resignation had come to the minister the morning after the trial at the parsonage; merely the bare statement that he, Jan Harmdyk, no longer considered himself a member of the Christian Reformed church of Harlem, and that he would leave whether the consistory accepted his resignation or not. Nothing more; no reservation of any kind. Jan had burned all his bridges behind him.

He had been elder of the church continuously for twenty-seven years!

As soon as the people had left the church the pent-up feelings broke loose. The announcement was a surprise to all and it had stunned them for a moment; but by the time they had reached their buggies the women at least were ready for discussion. The men, deliberate as always, carefully took the quids of tobacco from their tobacco boxes — quids that had been just as carefully deposited there on entering the church.

Nellie left the church slowly and she regretted having sat so far toward the back. It would never do to wait for the minister. But in spite of that she came near making up her mind to defy Harlem conventions. But the people did not know her secret; and the people's opinion — yes, she needed their good opinion more than ever now.

She must speak to the minister. It was no longer

merely an intense desire. The announcement had stunned her and she must see him, she hardly knew why. Somehow he must save her from some danger or she him, she did not know which. Once on the highway she was almost sure to be given a lift by one of the neighbors going her way. How to escape this was her problem.

Dominie Van Weelen stepped from his pulpit briskly. Just as briskly he went through the inevitable ceremony of hand-shaking with the members of his consistory. This hand-shake, according to local tradition, was a token that the sermon had been accepted by the congregation through their representatives — that its orthodoxy was unchallenged! This morning Dominie Van Weelen gave no opportunity to his consistory for challenge. His hand-shake was nervous and vigorous, and before the stolid men could make up their minds to speak he was hastening down the aisle.

“ Say, Dominie, say! ”

An arresting hand was laid upon his arm and he was brought to an abrupt stop.

“ Yes, yes, Dirk, what is it? ” The words came quick and sharp.

“ Well, now, Dominie, you see, what you said there about infant baptism — you know, in your second division, the third point — ”

“ Yes, yes, well? ”

“ As I was sayin’ — that about infant baptism, you know — not that I disagree with it. It ain’t that, but — ”



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"Well?" The minister's eye flashed impatience.

"Well, I was thinkin' as I was sittin' there listening to your sermon, as it was n't quite *logisch* [logical] — at least not as *logisch* as your sermons usually are. Now, that point about infant baptism, as I was sayin' before — I know how you come at it because I know what Brakel says about it, but how about the others who have not read Brakel?"

Dirk Stormzand still detained the minister with an arresting hand. A theological discussion was far too sweet to him to be given up merely because the minister involuntarily tugged like a bull dog trying to escape its master. Dirk had a firm grip on the solid arm of the minister and he proposed to keep it until it should please him to end the discussion.

"No, maybe not," said Dominie Van Weelen a little irrelevantly, "that is — I mean —"

Glancing through the window he saw Nellie walking down the road — slowly, deliberately avoiding the buggies that might have an unoccupied seat.

"Oh, yes, I mean — it is a little hard as you were saying."

"But, then, a minister don't always think of them things," said the farmer deprecatingly. "Him what is always studyin' his books don't sometimes remember that a farmer has other things to do than read Brakel, and that he don't know when a sermon is *logisch* or not. Not that I don't think but that most of our farmers might read Brakel a great deal more than they do, but —"

"Yes, yes, I understand."

A slightly more violent tug at the restraining hand than before failed to loosen the grip.

Nellie had passed the elm tree. If there should be no people to see him so that he could make a dash for it, he might still overtake her!

"Now take me," continued the farmer deliberately, "I do as much work as the other farmers, but there is always some time left to read the sermons of Brakel, Smetegeld and Pietenpol. '*Waar het hart vol van is vloed de mond van over.*' [What the heart is full of the mouth overflows with], as we Hollanders say. That is a true sayin', but it is also true that what a man likes to do he finds time to do."

"I'm very busy just now, Mr. Stormzand," said the minister.

"Busy? Well, now, who would have thought so? A minister what has through with his sermon, who would have thought he could be busy?"

Stormzand made no move to act on the minister's suggestion. Because he could see no reason for the minister's haste such haste seemed preposterous and non-existent.

The minister again looked anxiously out the window. Nellie was beyond the big stone pile, and she was not walking slowly any more. She had, however, escaped a lift.

The hastily dismissed consistory members had by this time recovered from their surprise. They sidled up to where the minister and Dirk Stormzand stood talking in the aisle.

"Well, *nu*, Dominie, that is what comes of it,"

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said Gysbert Vissers, referring evidently to the resignation of Jan Harmdyk.

Dominie Van Weelen did not answer him.

"We'll have to hold a consistory meeting about it," said Hendrick Slotman, "he ain't gone yet."

Klaas Thielman gripped the minister's hand in a warm clasp.

"I'm sorry, Dominie, I'm sorry," he said brokenly — "that I — that I should be the cause of all this."

"Don't feel that way for a minute, Klaas," replied the minister, for the first time that morning putting any warmth into his hand clasp; "you are not the cause of Harmdyk's resignation, and I shall be the first one to stand by you on this. As I said the other night you had the right to hit back when attacked. No one need make a molly-coddle of himself. I myself should freely strike under such circumstances."

Gysbert Vissers for a moment gave way to his besetting sin of agreeing with everything said:

"*Ja, ja*, that seems right too." Then bethinking himself of his relations with Jan Harmdyk, "Well, well, but — we must remember, brothers, that we are Christians. That is all well and good for the world, but not for such as us."

"On the contrary," declared the minister decisively, "I should respect a man's Christianity more for that very thing. Manhood is what I want to see grow out of a man's religion — an insistence on keeping strong and vigorous and beautiful this temple of the Holy Spirit."

"But, Dominie," objected Dirk Stormzand, the theologian, "that is not how father Brakel looks at it. The body is but a prison and we must get ready for the life to come."

"That may be Brakel's idea; it is not however the way Christ thought about it, if I read the Scriptures aright. We are living in a different age now than Brakel's."

Through the window the minister saw Nellie — a dim object of shimmering blue in the distance.

"You are quite young yet, Dominie, to think different from Brakel," said Dirk Stormzand reprovingly.

Then it was that Dominie Van Weelen let loose a thunder bolt. Years after the minister had left the community Dirk Stormzand, the theologian, still discussed the statement:

"I have never read a single sermon of Brakel," he said, "so I can't be expected to agree with him in everything."

This was so iconoclastic that the listeners were stunned for a moment. While they were sagely cogitating on it the minister found an opportunity to slip away.

Nellie was out of sight. Dominie Van Weelen turned slowly to the parsonage.

As the distance between her and the church had increased Nellie had increased her pace until finally she was walking almost in a panicky run. Too proud to look back to see if the minister were following, she hurried on, her eyes shining with unshed tears,

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her breast heaving with something very much akin to anger, her beautiful little hands clinched in a determination that gathered force as she walked along.

The shock of her father's secession was lost sight of in the greater shock that had followed. The minister's failure to appear had done more than wound her vanity. During the days since the scene in the blackberry patch brief periods of uncertainty had depressed the girl. She had looked upon herself with the eyes of her other self — falling an easy victim before the first good-looking young man who had happened to come her way. In her Psychology of the Romantic Movement days she used to aim her shafts of sarcasm at just such silly girls selling their souls and bodies to a man who happened to have a smooth tongue and masterful ways. She had always pounced upon the disillusionment that was sure to come some time after the last chapter had ended!

And here was she, swept off her feet, and that by a man who delivered sermons in Dutch! What of her theories about art, her ambitions, her hopes of a career?

Such periods of depression had been momentary — mere flecks of foam dissipated the next moment by the power of the force underneath.

As she walked home, however, these little flings of sarcasm at her own expense came crowding back upon her. And then the tears came, then anger, then resolution.

Stopping under the great oak tree at the dividing

line of her father's farm she removed the traces of weeping from her eyes. She was far enough away now to risk looking back. The minister was still in the church arguing with his consistory members.

Arrived home Nellie immediately began helping the hired girl to prepare the dinner. There was a hard glint in her eyes as she set the food on the table so that Jan Harmdyk did not dare ask any questions about the services. It was the first service during more than a quarter of a century at which he had not occupied his pew in the front of the church. But not a sign did the girl give that she had passed through any unusual experience. She did not admit even to herself that her self-respect had instinctively brought to her cheek the blush of shame.

The Reformed church of Harlem was glad to receive the disgruntled member of the Christian Reformed church into its fold, for the following Sunday Jan had announced himself as a member of the rival congregation.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### JAN PLAYS RELIGIOUS POLITICS

**A**LTHOUGH the years had softened the feeling of intense rivalry between the Reformed church and the Christian Reformed church of Harlem, there was enough of the bitterness caused by the Great Schism of the early seventies left for a man of Jan Harmdyk's genius for making trouble to work on. The Reformed church had been in the field first when the Hollanders came to Harlem twenty-eight years ago. It had gradually been making some headway among the people, when the Free Masonry agitation set father against son, and brother against brother in a fierce religious civil war.

In Harlem Jan Harmdyk had been the ringleader of the seceders. He was a young man then, with all the fire of youth burning in him at white heat. Secret societies became a battle cry for him, and he cried it throughout the community. Often, neglecting his work on the farm, he argued religion with those of his neighbors who were slow to leave the fold of the mother church. He formulated his creed against secret societies in a set of written paragraphs entitled, "Thirteen Reasons Why a Christian Cannot Be a Free Mason." His philippics against the Reformed church became classics in the community.

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He was looked upon by his followers and friends as the arch-champion of the true and untainted faith; by his enemies as the great disturber and agitator of the community.

After weeks of tireless agitation Jan had finally succeeded in forming a little congregation. Services were held in a barn, and this touch of hardship only helped to give zest to the religious adventure. Others suddenly were imbued with a holy horror of all secret societies and joined the flock. The congregation grew until it outstripped the mother church in Harlem, and the religious warfare became bitter and ruthless. Occupants of adjoining farms frequently became sworn enemies for the time being because one's views on secret societies differed from those of the other.

And all this in spite of the fact that there was no lodge within a hundred miles of Harlem, and was not likely to be for several generations to come.

As the years passed the fires engendered by the Great Schism, as the revolt came to be known, gradually began to burn lower, and the humanizing power of daily association did much toward changing the bitterness into friendly rivalry. Even Jan Harmdyk, from the first an elder of the new congregation, began to admit, after nearly a quarter of a century, that perhaps some of the members of the Reformed church might be saved. Many of his neighbors had come to this conclusion years before; but they proudly maintained the superiority of the Christian Reformed faith on all occasions, and there was more joy over



one proselyte gained from the rival congregation than over ninety and nine sinners out of the "world."

Largely for that reason it was natural that the members of the Reformed church experienced a glow of very human feeling of retaliation when the original secessionist, the ringleader, the arch champion of the opposition, the bitter opponent of their faith, the embodiment of all that the seceded church had stood for during more than a quarter of a century, came back to them. Figuratively they hoisted him up on their shoulders, spread palm branches in the path of his triumphal march, and sang hosannas for the conquering hero. Many a man despised Jan for his defection from his own cause; but as an aggregate body the people looked upon him in triumph. He was to them the embodiment of the conquering spirit of their congregation—the spirit that would lead them on to some shadowy victory still beyond their vision.

Jan was wise enough to take advantage of this wave of enthusiasm before the inevitable reaction should set in. In less than a week after he had joined the church he succeeded in having himself appointed a member of the board of trustees provided for in the will of Immanuel Sommers.

It was the first step in a plan he had formed of harassing Dominie Van Weelen in his work and forcing him to leave the community.

This plan of Jan Harmdyk was based upon another bit of local history. A few years after the death of Immanuel Sommers the Reformed church of Harlem

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had been caught in the grip of evangelist Erdman. A fanatic of Dutch descent, Erdman had felt called upon to bring, as an evangelist, the message of salvation to his fellow countrymen. Harlem had been included in his itinerary, and in an incredibly short time the stolid, slow moving, judicial-minded Hollanders had been converted into religious enthusiasts.

This was some three or four years before the advent of Dominie Van Weelen in the community, but the echoes of the revival meetings had not completely died out when the minister came. Whenever a revival meeting was mentioned Mrs. Wachs lost her grip on herself and launched forth into a heated tirade against that particular form of salvation.

"That's what them Reformed people thought," she said to the minister, "that we can get into heaven by a lot of screaming and hollering and yelling and light-hearted praying."

Unconsciously she greatly exaggerated the scenes enacted by the religious rivals of her church.

"They get converted one day," she continued, "and the next day are worse than ever. There was Wilm Winters, the worst rascal that ever was known in Harlem. He went to them revival meetin's with a lot of other boys to poke fun at Preacher Erdman, and then one night —"

"A case of 'he came to scoff and remained to pray,' I suppose," broke in the minister.

"A what?" asked Mrs. Wachs mystified.

"Nothing — nothing at all; then what happened?"

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"As I was sayin', he went with a lot of other boys to the meetin' and then one night he got *converted*." There was a delicious sarcasm in the tone of Mrs. Wachs that Dominie Van Weelen was human enough thoroughly to enjoy.

"Yes, he got *converted* and joined the church, and the Reformed people made a lot of ado about him. They said it showed what they could do when they got started, and that in less than no time there would n't be nothing left of our church. *Ja*, they said *that*, and not once, but again and again."

"And how did — what was his name, Winters? turn out? Was he permanently converted?"

"*Converted?*" Mrs. Wachs laughed out loud at the absurdity of the question; "*converted!* I should say no! Two weeks later he ran away with a well-to-do widow what also was *converted* by Preacher Erdman. He lives in De Stad now and Hendrich seen him once goin' into such an *operhouse!*"

No further proof was needed in Mrs. Wachs' opinion of the total and irrefutable depravity of the alleged convert than that he had been seen entering a theater.

"That kind o' took the wind out of the sails of the Reformed," continued Mrs. Wachs. "If it had not been for that we might not have put a stop to it as soon as we did."

"Put a stop to it? You don't mean to say you compelled them to abandon revivals?"

"I sure do," came the emphatic answer. "And they'll never be startin' up again accordin' to my

way of thinkin'—not as long as we Christian Reformed are here to stop it."

"But how could you stop it? They have a right to worship as they see fit."

Mrs. Wachs shot a curious glance of suspicion at the minister. Then she decided he was testing the strength of her religious convictions.

"That's what they said too, but they began to think different when we got to show them the Scriptures."

"Which passages did you refer them to?" asked the minister out of curiosity.

Mrs. Wachs was caught. She could glibly echo the arguments of the theological lights of the community but was not expert in ready reference to their sources of authority.

"Well, now, as to that, I can't just say—at the moment—but Dirk Stormzand knows, and there are others what know all the verses. But we stopped them all right."

She stood a moment her forehead puckered in thought, like one trying to recall all the processes of a complicated legal opinion. Then suddenly the face brightened.

"And it was n't only that but you know I told you of the will of Immanuel Sommers."

"Yes, yes, I could n't forget that."

"Well, you see, that will said that both churches could use the building the same. But the revivals was goin' on every night that summer and our people said as it were n't fair."

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"I see, the doctrine of the square deal helped you out."

"What — what was that?"

"Nothing at all; I was merely talking."

Mrs. Wachs considered Dominie Van Weelen's comments on her story queer, but did not pause to question them.

"*Ja*, that was how it was done, although no one what knows what's in the Bible but would n't say that revivals are not the way of salvation."

Luckily the housekeeper did not notice the minister's broad smile.

"But that's the way them Reformed are. Even when Dirk Stormzand proved to them that it was against the Bible they held on with their revival meetin's. But then our people took it up to the Committee, that I told you about as was appointed in Immanuel Sommers' will."

"Did n't you say that two of the members of the committee were dead? I suppose the dead ones were Christian Reformed?"

"*Ja*, two of 'em are dead, but they ain't both from our church. One of them is from the Reformed, so that was even all right."

"I see, the non-denominational member of the committee held out — a serious blow at the doctrine of the survival of the fittest."

"What was that?" queried the old woman again.

"One of my faults is that I am always talking too much."

"*Ja*, they was even divided all right. There was

one Reformed, one from our church and one outsider. So it was all fair and square."

"And they voted against the revivals?"

"Ja, that's what they did. The Reformed member held out for the meetin's and the Christian Reformed member held out just as strong against the meetin's, so the outsider had to decide and he put in his vote with our member."

"Which shut the building against revival meetings?"

"Yes, you guessed it right. They ain't held no revival meetin's since that day."

"And that was a great victory for our church?" smiled the minister.

"That it was, and the Reformed ain't never quit grumbling about it and sayin' as it ain't fair that they can't hold what meetin's they like. Next thing you know they'll be wantin' to hold dances and such other abominations in the building. They once even tried to let in such a man with a fiddle, what goes around playin', you know. But we stopped that too."

"But why should we object so strenuously to revivals?" asked the minister; "if they prefer that way of salvation why not let them pursue it?"

"Well, well, Dominie!" exclaimed Mrs. Wachs in a tone of protest. Then, remembering that the minister was merely testing her, she said,

"We all know that that ain't the right way; and the Reformed people should also know it. To make conversion sure there must be instruction in the

catechism. But they don't stand for no reason. When I was a girl we had to learn the Heidelberg catechism by heart — questions and answers both, and before I was seventeen I could say it from beginning to end and from end to beginning. I can still say it from beginning to end," and to make good her word she began rattling off the old familiar words of the First Lord's Day: "*Wat is U eenige troost in leven en in sterven?*" (What is thy only comfort in life and in death?)

"Remarkable! remarkable!" exclaimed the minister after she had glibly recited half a dozen questions and answers without pausing.

"Yes," she said proudly, "in them days the boys and girls knew something about the catechism; and then when they joined the church they did not stand there as 'dum' as an ox. Then when the minister and the elders and deacons asked questions we could answer them. But now I don't see how some of the young folks ever get through it."

Dominie Van Weelen smiled at the naive insistence on the necessity of exact knowledge of the words of a religious document as a means of salvation.

"Now the Reformed people," she continued with a suggestion of contempt in her voice, "they don't hold catechism classes no more — not since two years ago, and it is all on account of them revivals. You know, when they held them here they said revivals was much better than catechism, and so they need n't hold that any more. Then when we made them stop revival meetin's they started up again for a little

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while with catechism, but there was no heart in it and when their dominie left, they quit it and have not held it since. Now us, even when we ain't got no dominie, the elders hold the catechism classes," she concluded proudly.

With the situation thoroughly in mind Jan Harmdyk made his plans. His fiery temperament never permitted him to allow grass to grow under his feet, and he began his campaign with the zeal of a crusader, just as twenty-eight years before his zeal and energy had brought about the revolt in Harlem.

Of the handful of families that made up the Reformed church in Harlem he knew two or three, who, he felt sure, would respond to his scheme. They had been more personally affected by the war on revival meetings than most of the others and they did not share the easy good nature of their neighbors when this subject was broached. That they would welcome his help he did not doubt.

The same day Jan was appointed a member of the Sommers Board his horse could have been seen hitched up to the corn-crib of Sake Volmers. The animal stood patiently waiting while his master talked religion with Volmers in the latter's corn-field. Sake stood leaning on his hoe, his left foot planted against his right knee, his lower limbs forming a clumsy triangle with an extension line running from one of the points to the ground. Jan leaned against the straggling rail fence and flicked with the lash of his



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whip the heads off the tall thistles that grew in the fence-corners.

"I always fought you hard when I was with *them*," Jan was saying. "I always fight hard; you know I do, and it would n't be no use for me to try to make you believe different."

"I know you did; you were the man I always had it in for the most," said Sake frankly.

"And I ain't goin' to stop now," continued Jan; "I'll fight as hard as I ever did."

A glow of enthusiasm overspread the face of Sake Volmers. Here was Coriolanus come to fight for the Volscians.

"In the seventies it was different from what it is now," continued Jan, to square himself with his own conscience; "then the Free Masons forced us out. But that's neither here nor there," he added quickly, anxious not to offend the man whom he was seeking to make his ally. "That's over now, and so many more evils have grown up in the other church that I for one can't stand it there no longer."

"That's where you hit the nail on the head. They always think they are so much holier than us, but they ain't."

"Especially in Harlem here," continued Jan, ignoring Sake's remark, "it was too much for me. Now that there drain — you know as well as me that they stole the bread out of my mouth."

Sake agreed eagerly. As a matter of fact, he was in sympathy with the digging of the drain, but that was settled anyway, and he did not care to risk the

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loss of his Coriolanus because of a mere opinion of his. He recollected with secret amazement however, that members of the Reformed as well as of the Christian Reformed church had been interested in the digging of the drain.

"What I could never see," said Jan, "is why you people let them off so easy."

He thoughtfully picked the barbs out of the head of a thistle.

"So easy? What do you mean?"

"Well, just because you ain't got as many members as the Christian Reformed, ain't no sign that they can always sit on you."

It was significant that Jan referred to the members of the Reformed church as "you," and to the Christian Reformed church as "they." He had not yet been thoroughly assimilated by the denomination of his adoption.

"Just how do you mean that 'sittin' on us'?" demanded Sake.

"Well now, you know as well as me that they have been running you right along. I knew that when I was still with the other church, but you must n't think I was goin' to open my mouth to hurt my own people. But now it's different; I'm Reformed now."

Sake eyed this religious schemer with something like admiration. He shifted the supporting hoe to the other arm and planted the right foot against the left knee.

"Just what are you driving at?"

"Well, have you forgotten the revival meetin's?"

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"Well, *heden*, you are right — you are right!"

"Of course, I'm right," said Jan gaining confidence as he continued. "There you let them tell you you can't hold them revival meetin's when *you* don't say nothin' about what *they* do. Of course, I did n't say nothing for revivals when I was there. I saw they was stealing the members from our church and I was n't goin' to fight against myself; you can see that."

"Of course not; I can't blame any man for that — of course not. So that's why you people was against revival meetin's, because you was afraid it would hurt your church? — I thought so."

"You guessed it right, but why you just let it go I can't see."

"But the committee voted it down."

"Can't you try again?"

"But what good will that do?"

"It can't do no harm tryin', does it?"

"No — I guess not."

Strangely enough, Jan did not pursue the subject any further for the present. Making an excuse that he must get back to his horse, he left Sake and walked off between the rows of tall corn.

"Now, what is he after? That's what I'd like to know," mused Sake, shifting the hoe to the other arm and watching the gaunt figure of Jan Harmdyk slowly moving away.

Suddenly his face beamed with the light of discovery.

"Well, *heden! Dommert* that I am!"

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He threw down the hoe between two rows of corn and perched himself on the top rail of the fence to think.

"*Ja, ja*, now I see, now I see. But wait, see if I got it straight."

He counted off his ideas on his fingers.

"Now, let's see, Johannes Hilkman is dead"—Johannes Hilkman was represented by the grimy index finger. "Then there is Dirk Stormzand"—the second finger—"he is all the Christian Reformed have left. Then there's me"—the third finger—"and Wilson, the outsider, and now Jan Harmdyk. Even if it comes to the worst we stand two to two and Jan can handle Wilson some way or other."

He slapped the hand that had served as an adding machine for his ideas on his knee in loud admiration of his acuteness.

"That Jan Harmdyk is a wonder—yes, siree, a wonder."

The object of Sake Volmers' admiration was by this time busily engaged in conversation with another farmer a few farms distant. Later in the afternoon he could have been seen in still another field. Jan was very careful to whom he addressed his plans. He chose in each case one who was more than likely to meet him half way, and then, after a beginning had been made, the rest was easy. A review of his own motives in becoming Reformed, exclamations of wonder that his new colleagues should have put up so long with the arbitrary regulations of their religious opponents, hints at the possibility of finding a

remedy — and then he left, confident that his suggestions would do the rest.

In the course of a day or two Sake Volmers and all the others to whom Jan had revealed his plans darkly, stumbled upon the subject in the course of their talks, and each felt gratified that the solution he himself had found was agreed to by the others. Before long each believed that the plan had originated with him and therefore found the greater interest in urging it.

Nellie Harmdyk might have found the study of the psychology of her father quite as interesting as that of the Romantic Movement.

Jan realized that above all things it would be necessary to act quickly; there must be no opportunity for the Christian Reformed church to fill the vacancy in the Sommers' board by electing a new member. His own election had been veiled in considerable mystery — such a secrecy as is possible only when a church has a membership of but a few members.

When a sufficient number of the members of the congregation had discovered that they were the originators of a scheme for harassing the rival church a congregational meeting was called. A demand for a meeting of the committee had to be voiced by the people.

Jan did the talking.

"The Christian Reformed people are always objectin' to us having revival meetin's in the church," he began. There was a twitter of ill-suppressed

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merriment among some of the people who had often heard Jan discuss the other side of the question.

"You think," he continued as though in answer to their unspoken thoughts, "that I should not talk this way, seein' how I used to stand on this question. But in becoming a member of this church I've become a real member, not only one in name. I ain't changed my mind on revivals," he said shrewdly, guessing that was the best way to win them. "We are just as well off without them — not that they are wrong, not that," he added hastily, noticing signs of opposition among some in the audience, "but what I say is that it ain't fair that the Christian Reformed should use the building right along more than what we do."

There were vigorous expressions of approval of this sentiment.

"They 're usin' the building a good deal more than what we do. They won't let us hold revival meetin's. Then why should we let them hold their catechism meetin's? Answer me that."

No one made answer however. To many the unreasonableness of the whole arrangement came with a shock of discovery. But to forbid the holding of a catechism class seemed to some almost unevangelical. This kind of church work had been allowed to drop in their congregation, but their creed was not at all inimical to the institution.

But Jan talked as he had never talked before. Possessed of a kind of homely eloquence, he wielded his idiomatic Dutch with telling effect.

"He's a mighty good talker," said one farmer to his neighbor.

It was simply a matter of fair play, argued Jan, a matter of tit for tat. Someone made a suggestion of not returning evil for evil, but Jan swept this passionately aside, and the natural impulse of the farmers was with him on this point. The meeting resulted in an almost unanimous demand for a session of the Sommers' committee.

Wilson, the "outsider," was chairman of the committee, and Jan prevailed upon him to call a meeting for the following evening. Dirk Stormzand was completely in the dark when the call came to him the next day. It was the first meeting since the revival agitation five years ago and the Harlem theologian wondered what question of church government could be up for consideration.

When the demand for the cessation of the catechism classes came he brought all his profound knowledge of theology to bear on the question, and he quoted Brakel and Pietenpol and Smetegeld and several others to prove that the catechism class was a divine institution.

But all in vain. Sake Volmers and Jan Harmdyk were not to be moved by argument, and Wilson, who could have made the vote a tie, was an easy going individual who did not understand the difference between the two churches and did not care to. He usually followed the line of least resistance, and his vote usually depended on the strength of the pressure that was brought to bear. Moreover, it seemed but

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fair to him that the church that five years ago had made demands should now grant concessions. His vote was cast in support of Sake Volmers and Jan Harmdyk.

Again Nellie might have found food for thought in the psychology of Jan Harmdyk.



## CHAPTER XIX

### AT THE CHURCH DOOR

**W**HEN Dominie Van Weelen rode his bicycle up to the Harmdyk home on Monday morning Jan was away lining up his neighbors. But the minister did not come to see Jan, and when Baby Johannes told him of his father's absence he showed no signs of disappointment. The boy's eager questions about the canoe and about the condition of the trapeze on the parsonage lot received but scant attention. The minister's answers were perfunctory. There was no enthusiasm in them, and with the intuition of youth Baby Johannes knew something was wrong. Straightway he stood tongue-tied, all his eager boyishness absorbed in the problem of somehow helping the hero of his day dreams.

Dominie Van Weelen peered through the slits of the corn-crib, but Nellie was not in the blackberry patch. The hot sun was beating down upon it and a few hens were complacently basking in the shade of the bushes, their feathers covered with dust and spread out over the nestlike hollows in the loose sand.

Baby Johannes divined somehow that it was his sister the minister was looking for.

"Nellie's gone to Oom Peter in De Stad," he volunteered.

"To Oom Peter in De Stad? Why — When was that?"

"Yesterday," said the boy, "after she came home from church. Pa did n't want her to go to church, you know. But she went." There was a note of exaltation in the lad's voice, as though he were telling of the deed of a Joan-of-Arc-like heroine. "*Ja*, she went, but pa, he would n't let me go." This was said a bit timidly in excuse for his own unaccountable absence from services. "But Nellie went and pa he scolded her, and there was an awful time, and Nellie would n't give in."

"What, when she came home?"

"No, before she went. When she came home Nellie did n't say nothing. She did n't even want to tell what the text was. And then when we was eating dinner she said to pa she was goin' for a long visit to Oom Peter in De Stad. Pa was mad but Nellie ain't afraid. She went anyway — this morning."

"And when will she be back?"

Baby Johannes shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know."

His lip trembled for a moment with the pathos of her absence, but Dominie Van Weelen was too much absorbed in his own sorrows to notice what a tragedy Nellie's absence was to the starved little life of Baby Johannes.

"I don't know," the boy repeated mechanically, and now the tears came to his eyes and a sob shook him.

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Dominie Van Weelen suddenly started as from a trance.

"You poor little shaver!" he exclaimed. Then he slapped the boy on the back as one man slaps another, and he forced a cheerful laugh.

"Come, Baby Johannes, cheer up. She'll come back soon. Come on, let's go to the river and see how the canoe is getting on."

Instantly the tears vanished.

"Goody!" the boy exclaimed and ran down the path to the river. The minister following suddenly saw him stop and cast a worried look at the house.

"What's the matter, Baby Johannes?"

"Pa'll lick me when he finds out I've gone with you—but—but—it don't hurt so very much. Come on!"

He jumped into the canoe and Dominie Van Weelen, promising himself that he would protect the boy somehow against the parental anger, followed him.

That evening the two canoeists paddled back between the long stretches of marsh, tired but happy. As the dusk grew deeper and the purple flush died out of the western sky Baby Johannes' eyes shown bright with the ineffable splendor that comes of the understanding of the true sweetness of life. The low monotone of the chirp of the cricket in the marshes wove itself into his dreams and the unuttered thoughts—inarticulate functionings of the imagination of boyhood—peopled his horizon with the images of wonderland. Dominie Van Weelen too had succeeded in escaping from the vague misgivings of the morn-

ing caused by the absence of Nellie. The simple primitive experiences of the day had "renewed his youth like the eagles," and he handled the paddle with the zest of boyhood. And when he looked into the shining eyes of the boy he experienced the unspeakable joy of him who knows he has brought the Kingdom of God a little nearer to some soul. He had that day spent the fleeting hours in the business of his Father.

Wilson, the "outsider," was commissioned as chairman of the Sommers' committee, to carry the decision of that body of Dominie Van Weelen. The only American in a community of Hollanders, he was quick to discover their foibles. Since he had no decided religious opinions himself, the endless theological squabbles of his neighbors were a constant source of amusement to him. He had but a passing acquaintance with Dominie Van Weelen; but the Dutch minister, as a type, was well known to him, and he looked forward with pleasure toward the interview in which, he felt sure, he would provide many a shock for the young divine.

"I'll hold that catechism class next Wednesday evening if I have to fight my way into the building."

Wilson was not at all prepared for that kind of an answer. The minister militant, in the physical sense, was a new species to him.

"But, Mr. Van Weelen," he protested, "you know the terms of the bequest, I trust."

"Yes, perfectly. I have a housekeeper who has

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spoken of hardly anything else since I arrived," he laughed, and Wilson could not help but join in the hilarity though he had come prepared for anything but laughter.

"The trouble is," continued the minister, "the committee was packed. No opportunity was given us to fill the vacancy in our church. It is true, we are supposed to keep it filled, but the omission of this formality by both churches during the past five years has given it the sanction of an unwritten law. Simply a case of clever maneuvering by a disgruntled member of my church, and the other members of the committee followed his lead."

Wilson winced under the directness of the statement of Dominie Van Weelen, but he loved an argument and he disputed the point with a great deal of spirit.

"A man of your caliber is out of place in that little one-horse church," he said finally with a touch of admiration in his voice.

"I thought so too at one time when a student, but I feel differently about it now. The small church offers the very opportunities that are needed to get the best work out of a man there is in him."

"But one of these extreme fire-and-brimstone affairs — that seems to me not exactly your style. You might have found a place more to your taste," replied Wilson reprovingly.

"The church is not the important thing. Denomination is largely a matter of temperament. You can perhaps appreciate that because you are far

enough away from all denominations to give you a fairly good perspective."

Wilson wondered at the dispassionate tone in which this statement was made. It was merely a scientific fact; other ministers, he thought, would have said the words reprovingly.

"Yes, yes," he said hurriedly, just to say something.

"For instance, no sane man would ever think of introducing the emotionalism of the Free Methodists among these staid and sturdy Dutch farmers, any more than he would think of introducing the stern type of Calvinism that obtains here among an emotional southern people. The Dutch farmer is a reasoning being; to him theology is the breath of life. If I am going to do my work among them at all, why not use the tools that are fitted to the task? If they can be taught the true meaning of life through the medium of the Christian Reformed denomination better than through another, why not use that?"

"So that's why you object to revivals?"

"I don't object to revivals — in the slums of the big cities, for instance. But I object to having the Dutch farmer make a fool of himself. In these slums of the country other methods must be pursued."

It was something so entirely new coming from the lips of a Harlem minister that Wilson was at a loss for an answer.

"So you are not one of them that think the Christian Reformed church is the only entry into heaven?" he finally asked.

"Not the only one. For all practical purposes our church is as good as any, but I do not claim a monopoly for it."

"And still you're a minister in that church."

"Why not? I told you it was the best tool at hand."

"I was not thinking of how you could stand them, but how they are willing to put up with you."

"I see."

"In the past, you know, the people of your church have always insisted on a minister whose prejudices were just a little more pronounced than their own. He must walk the beaten path or the tongues began to wag, and that usually was the end of him. It is true, the tongues have had little time to wag about you. But if you are one of the liberal kind, why do you stick to the rigid forms of the church—the catechism class, for instance, for which you say you are willing to fight your way into the building?"

"Because I believe most emphatically in education. It is not merely a matter of the form with me. If that were the only thing involved I would not consider it worth arguing about. But through the medium of the class I can do my work among the young members of my flock more effectively than in any other way. That for me is the stamp of divinity on it, and that is the reason I shall make a fight for it."

"I am beginning to understand you."

Wilson had completely lost his natural combativeness. Having come prepared to shock an ultra con-

servative minister with his radical ideas and having found that minister more advanced in his views than he was himself, he found himself agreeing with every statement because he caught fully its logic.

"You are mighty radical for this part of the country," he said weakly.

"No, you can hardly call it radical. For instance, clinging to the doctrines formulated into the Heidelberg catechism can hardly be called radical. No thinking man, it seems to me, can possibly ignore the social problems of this day. And in so far as the recognition of this goes, you might perhaps call me radical, although it is nothing more or less than looking at a fact as a fact. No one, for instance, can help but recognize the fact of poverty and social injustice."

"No, no," said Wilson much mystified although he laid claim to some education, "I suppose not."

"People may close their eyes to it, but if they are willing to see what goes on in the world they cannot help but notice the inexcusable inequality of things. I know, a minister, at least a minister around here, is not supposed to pay any attention to politics and the social order. He is supposed to think and talk and live and feel and preach the Kingdom of God and to do it all the time in strictly Scripture terms and no other. But I happen to believe that politics and the social order are as truly a part of the Kingdom of God as the Sermon on the Mount. And when I am out on the river saving a farmer boy from becoming a consumptive I am as much engaged in the



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work of the Lord as if I were up in my study writing a sermon."

"Well, well, now think of that!" exclaimed Wilson in delighted assent. Many a time he had horrified his neighbors by insisting that they had a religion of creed which made them forget they were human beings. He told the minister as much and was very emphatic in his denunciation of what he called the tyranny of creed.

"But, my dear Mr. Wilson, I did not mention creed, and you are entirely mistaken if you think my religion is a creedless thing. I cannot conceive of that kind of a religion. The very essence of all religion must necessarily be faith."

"Well — how — just how do you stand!" stammered Wilson.

"Broadly speaking, there are two classes of confessors of religion. One spends his days and nights searching the Scripture and the authorities of his particular church for proof of a certain set of beliefs that form his creed. Naturally he clings with all the power there is in him to the wording and the form of those beliefs and their proof. Another man reacts from this kind of religion; he is of a fiery temperament perhaps, and is repelled by the coldness of it all. He plunges into what he calls life, cuts loose from what you call the tyranny of doctrine, and feeds his soul and appeases his conscience with social service. It is all a matter of temperament; all the world in fact is in some degree divided into conservatives and progressives. There is nothing new in that.

But I find that my religious aspirations are best satisfied by having something of both."

"Yes, yes," said Wilson eagerly agreeing.

"I look upon doctrine as the foundation, the moorings to which one is attached by unbreakable bonds. It is a textbook to him in times of difficulty, something like a railroad time-table, only not as precarious and uncertain as many a time-table. As well run a train without a definite schedule as have a religion without a creed. For that reason I insist on the education of the young people of my church in a creed, and for that reason I am willing to make a fight to maintain the right."

"I had never looked at it in just that way before," said Wilson lamely.

"The modern tendency, you know, is," continued the minister, "to make light of creed and to put all the emphasis on social service. We can never have too much social service, I'm convinced of that; but social service is not at all incompatible with having a creed. Still there is always a fight on between the old order and the new. The old clings to forms merely and exhausts its energies that way; the new reacts from this and often goes too far by cutting loose from the moorings entirely. It may seem hopeless to you in a community like this, but while I am here I am going to try to reconcile the two. In this case it means largely putting the emphasis on social service, since there is no lack of adherence to the letter of the law here."

"I see, I see," said Wilson; but when he left he

had but a dazed notion of what the minister really meant.

"Sorry I voted that way," he murmured to himself as he trudged along the highway, "but it can't be helped now."

When Dominie Van Weelen's answer was reported to him Jan Harmdyk burst out in a sudden passion.

"We'll give him fight! We'll give him fight!" he exclaimed and shook his fist at an imaginary opponent.

"We'll give him fight!" echoed Ezra elated at the prospect. Almost instinctively Ezra hated the minister. He had hated him from the first. He had never come very close to any of the ministers that had served the congregation and he had attended church twice a day on Sundays merely because his father's will was stronger than his own. But his feeling for the other ministers had had something in it of contempt. It was all well and good for them to preach and pray, his attitude said, but they were missing the really good things that gave spice to existence. They were having a dull time. Some day in the shadowy future he supposed he would have to let them come into his life, but that would be merely to escape the wrath to come, a subject that was sometimes very near to his mind.

But with Dominie Van Weelen it was entirely different. This minister was enjoying life. He was a man before he was a minister; and although Ezra did not put this thought into words, he felt it. Dominie Van Weelen challenged Ezra in some mys-

terious way and made him feel uneasy. Never had the minister said anything that could have put the boy on his guard against him, but his whole personality, his zest in life, gave Ezra a feeling of unpleasant uncertainty.

The fact is that the minister's essential manhood was an indictment against Ezra's baser self and that baser self fiercely resented it. He hated the minister frankly with an instinctive hate. Therefore when his father said, "We'll give him fight," Ezra gladly echoed the words. At last there was a real bond between father and son, and for the first time in their lives they discussed a subject together with a spontaneous, common interest.

"I guess he ain't goin' to hold that catechism," said Jan triumphantly after a lengthy conference with his son.

"Well, I guess not," was the answer, "or else he's smarter than we think he is."

When Dominie Van Weelen reached the church at half past seven the next Wednesday evening he found the boys and girls huddled about the entrance. The usual hilarity of youth was absent, and there was an expectancy in their demeanor that told him instantly something was wrong.

"Well, Jakie," he said kindly addressing a bashful, red-headed boy.

There was an awed silence among the others which filled Jakie with a sudden fright and made his knees tremble. Unable to articulate clearly he had his difficulties increased because he tried to speak in the

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English tongue — the language in which the minister had addressed him.

“The — the — the — door —” he stammered.

To help him out the other boys and girls looked significantly at the door of the church in the obscurity of the little entry. But no one offered a word in explanation. Dominie Van Weelen walked up to the entrance wondering, keeping an eye open for the unexpected.

A large padlock had been placed on the door, the shining black surface seeming to give a hint of the potential resistance there was in it.

An angry flush momentarily showing itself on the minister's face, he viciously jerked at the heavy steel lock, the boys and girls looking on in awed silence. Then he smiled at the futility of the movement.

“I shall be a few minutes late,” he said, “but shall be back directly to begin the services.”

Hurrying back to the parsonage he soon returned flourishing a hammer, a screw-driver and a cold-chisel. The boys straightway showed a keen interest in what was about to happen; one of the girls giggled nervously.

The loosening of a few screws, a few well-directed blows with the hammer on the cold-chisel, and the padlock lay on the floor, its power of resistance set at naught, its shining black surface marred by ugly gashes.

The boys and girls obediently filed into the building.

“Let us pray,” said the minister imperturbably.

The storm of protest that followed the forcing of the lock did not come solely from Jan and Ezra Harmdyk; nor yet exclusively from the members of the Reformed church. Jan Harmdyk preferred to do his storming in a more tangible form than words, and Ezra fully concurred in the plans of his father. It was the minister's own flock that caused the greatest amount of trouble; at least the people of his own church had much to say in criticism of his act.

He should have consulted the consistory. It was extremely undignified for a minister to take matters into his own hands in so arbitrary a way. And that before the boys and girls to whom he was supposed to be an example and whose spiritual welfare he had in charge. After all, they argued, a minister is a minister, and a farmer is a farmer. A pastor must be above his parishioners and show this in his actions. True, the placing of the lock on the door was unjustifiable, but was it not the business of the consistory to pass upon this matter and solemnly decide what course should be taken? The Christian Reformed people of Harlem felt that the incident had given the Reformed members of the community an opening for fault finding, and they who had through twenty-five years of fierce religious conflict formed the habit of being on the offensive did not relish being placed on the defensive even in minor matters. Like small calibered politicians, they were afraid of an act that was meritorious in itself but which was likely to have an effect which they could not calculate.

The action of the minister raised a storm in the house of Jan Harmdyk — a storm of denunciation that lacerated the boy-soul of Baby Johannes all the more because he dared not champion the cause of his hero. In spite of appearances, however, there was a fierce joy in the heart of Jan Harmdyk. The act of the minister was unprecedented, and therefore a fulfillment of Jan's oft-repeated prophecy that the minister would go wrong. And when the members of Dominie Van Weelen's own church began to take a similar view of the case the cup was filled to overflowing for the stern old farmer. His fierce denunciations gave him keen pleasure and his ravings about the dire calamities that were about to follow were like food to his soul. The tragic poet is said to find exquisite pleasure in telling his pathetic story; and the poetry in the Book of Lamentations seems to show that the ancient prophet had a feeling of intense satisfaction even as he wept. Jan Harmdyk's appetite was exceptionally excellent during those days, while his face was constantly shrouded in thunder clouds.

Somehow divining the inarticulate sympathy of Baby Johannes with the minister, Jan's talks with the burly Ezra in the child's presence were largely whispered conversations. Ezra would nod his head emphatically; there would be a wicked gleam in his eye and the answering look in the father's eyes showed how closely these two had drawn together during the past few days, united by a common bond of hatred.

When the minister reached the church door the following Wednesday evening he found the boys and girls once more assembled at the entrance. There was a look of cowed submission in the eyes of most of the boys; the girls looked apprehensively at the well-built figure of the minister striding down the graveled path.

In the little vestibule of the church stood Ezra Harmdyk effectually blocking the way. He leered insolently at the approaching figure of the minister, his hands dug nonchalantly in the pockets of his overalls. Terror dawned in the eyes of the girls as they saw the minister make no pause but stride up to the vestibule with the air of one who will brook no interference.

"Maybe you think you can pry *me* loose with a *screwdriver*," sneered Ezra.

Dominie Van Weelen did not answer the sneer.

He rapidly took a mental survey of the situation: After all, he was dealing with Nellie's brother. He, Dominie Van Weelen, was a minister of the gospel. It was incumbent upon a minister to preserve his dignity. The boys and girls standing about must not be shown an unchristian act. The muscles in his hands twitched however, and his eyes involuntarily showed the dangerous gleam that they used to show when as a boy he scrapped his way through the public school. He repressed his anger with an effort; all the arguments were in favor of settling the matter amicably.

"Ezra," he said with forced gentleness, "it is time



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to begin the catechism class. You will please step aside so we can proceed."

"Not by a darned sight," blurted out Ezra.

Dominie Van Weelen very gently took hold of Ezra's shoulder and attempted to push him aside. With sudden anger and perhaps misunderstanding the gentleness of the touch, the boy drew back his right arm and planted a stinging blow between the minister's eyes.

After all, a minister of the gospel is a man — at least a minister that is worth his salt.

Dominie Van Weelen stumbled back dazed. But instantly recovering himself, he leaped at his young adversary with the agility of a track champion. A moment later he was supporting Ezra in his arms and was wiping off with his pocket handkerchief the blood that flowed from the stunned boy's nose.

"I'm sorry I hurt you, Ezra." He tried to speak calmly.

Ezra blinked at the grave face above him and spat out some blood on the grass. He struggled to his feet and without looking for his hat stumbled homeward down the path.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE AFTERMATH

“**A**ND then what did you do?”

“Then? Then?” the boy stammered.

“Yes, then! You heard what I said.”

“Then — I hit him,” said Ezra sullenly.

“Why don’t you say so? That’s what you went out there for, did n’t you? Well, what next?”

“Next? What next?”

“Yes, what next!” cried the old man impatiently.

“Have you lost your senses? I asked what next — do you know it now?”

But Ezra answered his father never a word. He stood before him dazed and bewildered, for all the world like a little schoolboy ready to cry. There was a splotch of blood on his upper lip where the minister’s fist had cruelly cut into the tender tissue. Hatless the burly youth stood cowering before the impatience of his father. The evil gleam had left the eye and in his face was a misery that could not be accounted for by the physical pain which the fists of the minister had caused. Nervously touching the cut in his lips he winced as the grimy finger came into contact with the exposed flesh.

“Answer me, I tell you.” Then apparently noticing for the first time the boy’s hatless condition, “Where’s your hat?”

"At the church." Ezra escaped the harder question by answering the easier one.

"At the church!" echoed the father; "at the church. So he licked you."

There was a deliberate sting in every word. Ezra winced again, but this time it was not because of physical pain. He looked longingly at the doorway which the father blocked; he had a vision of his own room, the longing for stillness and darkness where no one could see him, the forgetfulness that he would find in sleep. He would draw the covers over his head like a tired child dreaming of bears, and seek forgetfulness where no one could see him and where no one could break in on his thoughts.

But Jan blocked the doorway and the insistent questions could not be ignored.

"He licked you," repeated the old man.

But even Ezra was not calloused enough to go into the details of his own defeat and Jan Harmdyk quizzed him in vain. He was compelled to draw his conclusions from the brief answers of the boy, and in the main the conclusions were correct. Ezra had been "licked" not only; he had been so thoroughly humiliated that something within him seemed to have been snuffed out. And that other something that was to take its place had not yet been born. So he stood before his father in the exasperating negative attitude that is to a fiery nature like a red garment to an enraged bull. Once Jan raised his hand to strike his son, but the instinctive realization that in his present state the boy would submit to a beating with-

out offering the least resistance appealed to the manhood in the farmer and he resisted the impulse.

When Ezra had finally escaped and had drawn the covers over his head he lay for a time thinking how he hated the daylight that had not yet fully died out of the sky. Then he dropped into a shamed and stunned sleep. He did not yet know that youth with its irresponsibilities had that night been left behind him, and that new issues would face him at the coming of the dawn.

At four o'clock the next morning Jan Harmdyk was puttering about the house. There were haggard lines in his face, signs of the sleeplessness that had been his during the night.

"Ezra-a-a," he shouted up the narrow stairway.

"Ja-a-a," came the sleepy response.

Baby Johannes stirred uneasily in his sleep as he lay by the side of his burly brother awakening. Neither one of the boys was fully awake but both felt the discomfort that the first breaking in of consciousness gives to the weary sleeper, and both also felt the delicious luxury of the forbidden moments in the twilight time between the awakening and the getting up.

Baby Johannes convulsively clutched the comforter. Though he was still asleep his body instinctively knew that when that harsh cry of "Ezra-a-a" broke in, the covers would, as soon as his brother was up, be roughly whisked off the bed, leaving his little bare body lying quivering in the raw morning air. Night clothes for boys were unthinkable in Harlem, and

many a morning in the winter time when the snow was on the window sill and the panes of glass had grown twice their natural thickness with the heavy white frost, the poor little body of Baby Johannes — that had been threatened by consumption almost since birth — had winced in the early morning hours when the sudden sting of the cold struck it. Often Ezra laughed, responding to the same crude sense of the comic that the person feels who puts icy fingers down another's neck. Oftener however the big fellow merely pulled the covers off the bed as a matter of course — a habit that had been formed through innumerable winter and summer mornings and that had become almost a matter of second nature. The operation was as natural for him as it was to don his clothes and step into his heavy plow shoes before going downstairs.

As he bent down this morning to go through the usual performance his eyes were somehow arrested by the sight of the tiny hands of Baby Johannes clutching the covers. At the same moment there was a sharp sting of pain in his cut lip and the instinctive look of amusement that had gathered on his face was suddenly converted into a pitiful look of discomfort. He let go of the covers, for the first time somehow unaccountably appreciating the hardship he had been causing his frail little brother. Apparently to make up for this incipient drop of mercy he gave the loop at the back of his shoe an unusually vigorous jerk. Then he stamped down the narrow stairway that led into the kitchen.

"Are you deaf again this morning?" growled Jan Harmdyk.

"I jumped out right away," Ezra defended himself.

"Jumped out right away!" the father exclaimed. "I called you three times, and here it's quarter after four. When do you think the horses will eat if you don't get up and feed them?"

Ezra sullenly took up his cap from a kitchen chair and went to the barn to do the morning chores.

"Johannes-es-es," shouted Jan Harmdyk up the stairway. But Baby Johannes, accustomed to being awakened by his big brother, did not hear the harsh voice. The myriad sounds of the twilight hour and the dip, dip, dip of the paddle were mysteriously weaving themselves into his dreams, while a grotesque giant with a stubby black beard and the hoofs of a horse was threatening to clutch his throat.

Suddenly the familiar sting of the morning air awakened him. The boy jumped and at the same moment the grotesque face of the giant transformed itself into the stern face of his father. Jan's hard hands closed down upon the thin arms of the boy. Lifting him bodily from the bed he set him down upon the hard floor with a force that made the tears spring into the boy's eyes.

"There! I'll learn you to get out of bed when I call for an hour."

All that forenoon Jan Harmdyk thought hard and before the dinner hour he came to a conclusion.

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"Ezra," he said, "I'm goin' to De Stad this morning."

Ezra was so surprised at this unexpected confidence of his father that he blurted out, "To De Stad? What for?"

Strangely Jan Harmdyk did not resent the inquisitiveness on the part of his son.

"To see that lawyer, you know, him what run for prosecutor last fall."

"What for do you want to see a lawyer?"

This question Ezra thought needed no apology. He could not have been more surprised if his father had announced he was about to ask for admission to an insane asylum. To see a lawyer! It was unthinkable; almost as unthinkable as it would have been to spend the evening in a theater.

"Did n't he lick you?" Jan evidently referred to the fight of the previous evening.

Ezra did not answer. At the reference to the fight he drew back into his cloak of sullenness, although he did not yet quite see the connection between a lawyer and the fight. All through the forenoon he seemed to have been in a daze, and now that his father made unusually short cuts in the conversation he could not follow. Somehow the face of Dominie Van Weelen persisted in obtruding itself between himself and clear thinking, and repeatedly he had caught himself saying, "I am sorry I hurt you, Ezra." The humiliation of the defeat had slowly given place to something else, to some elementary respect for strength in the only form in which he could appreciate it.

"I'll learn Dominie Van Weelen a thing or two," snapped the old man savagely.

"What do you mean?"

"Mean! *Dommert!* Did the minister hit your wits out of you? I mean that I'm goin' to land that hypocrite where he can't do no more harm. I'll show him that there is such a thing as law in the land. You mind how this lawyer last fall said as to how he would help us out if we ever needed anything in his line — that time when he came around for us to vote for him for prosecutor. I never would have thought that it would come to this, that I would have to take him at his word."

Suddenly Jan remembered his former attitude toward lawyers and a defense of his course seemed necessary.

"As a general thing lawyers ain't honest," he said. "I know that as well as anyone, and I ain't glad to go to one. But this one is some different. You remember how he gave a speech about Christian heroes in the town hall in De Stad, and I'm thinkin' there may be some good in him. But that's neither here nor there. '*Ijzer scherpt men met ijzer*' [Iron is sharpened with iron], says Solomon, and fire you've got to fight with fire. They stand for no law and order and they go direct against the word of God, so I must do something or else let them eat me up, and that ain't goin' to happen while there is breath in my body. First this hypocrite what calls himself a minister let's an elder in his church hit me black and blue and he ain't got no



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backbone enough to reprove him; and now he himself goes direct against the command of the committee and what's more he knocks you down. If he will not listen to the law of God and man of himself it becomes the duty, yes, the duty of others to *make* him do it."

To Jan this reason for going to consult a lawyer — archetype of the children of this world — seemed plausible enough. But Ezra had not been closely following him. He was not in the first place interested in justifying the act. He was concerned about the act itself and the consequences it might have.

"The minister licked me fair and square," he said simply, "and I ain't goin' to kick about it."

"Then it's a good thing you got a father what looks out for you," said the old man with gathering asperity in his voice.

Baby Johannes, seeing the determination in the stern face of his father, straightway began formulating a plan for the rescue of his hero. The minister must be apprised of his danger and must make good his escape before the county jail that held unimagined terrors for the boy, would yawn for him!

"I tell you, I hit him first," said Ezra obstinately.

Baby Johannes shot a glance of gratitude at his big brother, and there was in his eyes a soft light such as had not been there for Ezra for many a year. With quick intuition the boy felt that somehow Ezra was different from the Ezra he had known. It did not seem as impossible as it had always seemed to

have a common purpose and common thoughts with his big brother.

“ Well, he knocked you down, did n't he? ” snapped Jan — “ and him a minister! ”

Although he wished to prevent his father from going to see a lawyer Ezra did not know how to go about it. Resorting to law, he instinctively felt, would do violence to the respect for strength that had been born in him and that had made the humiliation of his defeat less keen. If he “ went to law ” about the fight he would again expose himself on all sides to the stings of humiliation. He did not want to be compelled again to hide his head under the covers of the bed at night and to hate the daylight dying in the western sky.

But after all, it was not so much consideration for the minister as for himself that made the course his father suggested seem repugnant to Ezra. Years of thoughts of self leave their marks on men even after they have walked for a long time in the paths of beauty, and Ezra's feet had hardly been turned from their old walks. He did not yet himself know that the faint stirrings in him that had caused him that morning actually to feel the discomfort he had been causing Baby Johannes each morning were the first fruits of a newness of life. Later he was to see dimly the incipient process, but as yet his objection to his father's proposal was instinctive and largely in self-defense.

But all his protests were in vain and his arguments were impatiently brushed aside. Jan thought of his

son contemptuously as he was in the habit of thinking of all who crossed his plans.

Giving explicit commands to Baby Johannes to pull the weeds out of the two acre potato patch during his absence, Jan went to De Stad. But no sooner was the familiar "buck-board" out of sight when Baby Johannes left his work and ran down the road. Not a moment was to be lost, and his breath came in piteous little jerks as the bare feet sped along the dusty highway. The perspiration ran down the little body, making his clothes stick to his skin and the dust gather in streaks on his legs. The boy's attempt at rescue was none the less heroic because it was so unnecessary. To him the danger seemed as threatening as if he had overheard a plot of murder.

"Quick! Dominie, quick!" he shouted, "they 're goin' to put you in jail!"

"Me in jail?" asked the minister mystified.

"*Ja, ja*, quick run!" meaning, there is no time to be lost in asking questions; the enemy is upon you and only blind, swift action can save you.

Dominie Van Weelen sat down on the steps of the porch and laughed. He took the dust-covered little boy upon his knee, Baby Johannes still urging haste.

Bit by bit the story came — the anger of his father, the determination to consult the dreaded lawyer in De Stad, the danger of the prison cell. It was all very real to the little country boy who thought of a police officer with fear and trembling, and who had once decided to become an officer of the law when

he should be a man, as a sure means of purchasing immunity from being locked up. His untutored imagination told him that an officer had the power of life and death; and a lawyer was his henchman, only the latter's motives were always evil and to fall into his hands was fatal.

"Don't worry, Baby Johannes," said the minister in a kindly tone. "They cannot touch me. I have done no wrong. Go back like a good little boy and do the work your father told you to do. And don't be afraid — they can't send me to jail."

Dominie Van Weelen could not repress a smile although he appreciated how serious a matter it seemed to the boy.

The word of his hero always sufficed for Baby Johannes, and the clouds passed away from his soul. Straightway he knew that he was tired — exhausted. There was fever in his veins. In his anxiety to save the minister the boy had overtaxed himself, and the puny strength there was in him now failed. Instead of sending him back to the potato patch the minister kept him at the parsonage until he should be able to return in safety.

"Ezra did n't want to go to a lawyer," said Baby Johannes in the course of the afternoon; "but pa's mad."

"Don't worry about it."

But to himself the minister said:

"An assault and battery case would be very awkward for a minister to get into even if, as in this instance, they could make out no case against me. It's

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the notoriety that hurts. And I believe Jan is capable of such a thing."

"When is Nellie coming home?" he asked presently.

"I donno," answered the boy sadly.

Dominie Van Weelen refrained from asking unavailing questions. The fragments of a shattered romance are not pleasant to contemplate, and there was something like bitterness in the heart of Dominie Van Weelen. There had been no word of explanation from the girl. Neither did it seem necessary to the minister. The tenderness in her face when she had bent over the bloody face of her father explained it all. And here was the added insult to her brother. Next would come the notoriety of an assault suit.

"But it was the only way," he said — "at least the only way I knew how to follow."

When Jan Harmdyk returned from De Stad he was in no better humor than when he went.

"He says as you've got to sign such a paper," he said to Ezra.

"What for a paper?"

"How could I know that? I ain't a lawyer."

"Could n't you sign it?" asked Ezra a bit eagerly.

"That's what I said; but he says as I was n't there at the fight and you will have to sign such a paper — complaint it was; that's what he called it — complaint."

"And if I don't sign it, then they can't have the minister arrested?"

"That's as the lawyer explained it; but I'll let you off from your work tomorrow and you go down and sign it."

"I'll work tomorrow," said the boy a little timidly, not relishing an outburst of anger on the part of his father.

"What's that?" shouted the old man. "You say you won't sign it? I tell you, you sign it and no back-talk about it. I'll show you who is boss, you or me."

But Ezra proved as obstinate as Jan was vehement, and no amount of threats by the latter could induce him to change his mind. He could not explain to himself just why the thought of going to law about the matter was so repugnant to him but the fact remained that it was, and he would cheerfully have accepted a beating from his father rather than sign the complaint. When he said, "He licked me fair and square," he summed up the situation to his own satisfaction, not knowing that some force had touched the innate decency in him as though an electric current had been turned on and that for him the throes of a rebirth had begun.

But the incident was not allowed to pass unnoticed even though Jan Harmdyk failed to gain legal redress. Tongues in Harlem wagged as they had never wagged before. Once more the members of the Christian Reformed church were in the unpleasant position of being put upon the defensive. The members of the Reformed church, incited and encouraged by Jan Harmdyk, pointed fingers of scorn at the

church that tolerated atrocities like the fight at the church door. They who during twenty-five years had always assumed the holier-than-thou attitude had been dragged through the mud. That the criticism was for the most part in the form of crude jokes did not take away the sting of it, and the members of the Christian Reformed church winced under the repeated blows of the opposition. Some even looked forward to the time when the Christian Reformed church might lose the upperhand in Harlem, and they naturally looked upon Dominie Van Weelen as a real danger.

When the members of his own church began the discussion in earnest the tempest broke loose. It was all the more violent because it came after a period of repression. The members had tried at first to save their self-respect by offering a slight defense of the minister's action. Ezra had hit first and therefore — and therefore —

That was usually the point where their defense broke down.

"It ain't who hit first," the members of the Reformed church would say; "it ain't who hit first. If it was two schoolboys fightin' there might be something in that, but a minister what is supposed to be an example to others to fight don't look just right. And then, too, after him had quarreled with the boy's father!"

The members of Dominie Van Weelen's church saw it in the same light and their defense was only half hearted. They could finally withstand the goading

pressure of the opposition no longer, and the imprecations upon the head of the minister who had placed the church in so false a position broke loose.

There was little work done on the farms those days. The incident was gone into in the minutest detail in the twenty-five homes that formed the constituency of the church. Every incident in the career of the minister in Harlem was subjected to the closest scrutiny of his parishioners. And practically the whole of it was condemned as far below the standard of what is expected from a minister of the Christian Reformed denomination.

There was the brief letter of acceptance to begin with. It lacked dignity and a proper sense of the awful significance of the work he was about to engage in. Then there was the ball paying, the trapeze performing, the racing, the boxing, and the whole category of kindred sports that Dominie Van Weelen had introduced into Harlem and that had often interfered with the work of the youngsters on the farm. The minister's bicycle and canoe came in for a special measure of abuse. They were not to be tolerated in a self-respecting community like Harlem. It was bad enough for others to waste their time in a canoe on the river, but for a minister to do this was condemned as an offense verging on positive immorality.

It came to pass that the consistory of the church could no longer ignore the storm that had been raised. They were at the mercy of the members, no matter what the personal opinions of the elders and deacons



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might be. Every day they were reminded that they were the guardians of the flock and that when the shepherd failed to provide for the sheep it became their duty to discipline him.

A special consistory meeting was called to consider the matter. That night Dominie Van Weelen did not act as chairman. He was the prisoner at the bar and sat calmly listening to the discussion. Klaas Thielman boldly championed the cause of the minister and Hendrick Slotman, as usual, mildly supported him. Dirk Stormzand, who had been elected elder in Jan Harmdyk's place, took the opposition, but he made the mistake of trying to convince the brethren by theological argument that the minister had done wrong. He applied his pet system of logic to the subject under discussion, and mere logic without incisive thrusts seldom results in action. Gysbert Vissers, as usual, agreed now with one side and next with the other; and the meeting broke up when it became clear that no definite course could possibly be decided upon.

"But a minister should be more circumspect," admonished Dirk Stormzand. "Instead of doin' these things he should go deep in Brakel and Pietenpol. Then there would be no time left for canoes and suchlike."

"And let yourself get soft and fat and useless," said Dominie Van Weelen to himself bitterly. "If that is religion what is it good for? But it is n't, thank God, it is n't." If the canoe and all the rest of the things his people objected to broke him, well, he would submit to being broken. They were part

of the only life he knew how to live, and to give them up in answer to a popular prejudice would be acting a lie. He owed it to himself and to the cause to walk uprightly before the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE COLD LIGHT OF REASON

“**B**UT, my dear girl, you must consider your own future,” said the minister with a suggestion of impatience in his voice. “It is all well and good to talk about protecting others, but it is not right to leave yourself unprotected. You must be sensible in a case of this kind.”

Sarah Vissers shook her head sadly but decisively. There was an obstinacy in that sad gesture that Dominie Van Weelen had learned to know all too well. In addition to his anxiety about his own affairs the predicament of the girl who was still making her home at the parsonage, because she was still unforgiven by her father, caused him much worry.

“Do you ever read novels?” he asked abruptly.

“Oh, my, no! — Why?”

“Merely a matter of foolish curiosity on my part. As I was saying, you must be sensible in a case of this kind; don’t let a sentimental notion about hurting others prevent you. Naturally it must hurt someone — someone who is innocent, perhaps. We cannot escape pain in this world. I am sure whoever it is you fear to hurt will be glad to bear the burden for the sake of the justice that in your case must be done. I must advise you again to be sensible about it.”

"I am," she said tearfully. Sarah was easily moved to tears these days and she often fell into fits of despondency. "It's my fault," she burst out.

"But he betrayed you and took advantage of your weakness," he said with almost brutal directness, hoping by this method to pierce the girl's defense. "I consider him a low down villain to abandon you now, and it is not right for you to protect him. I should like to push this fist into his jaw," he added to himself.

The conversation ended as such conversations had always ended since Sarah had come to make her home at the parsonage, and Dominie Van Weelen had to content himself with postponing the solution of the mystery. The finding of a solution however he imposed upon himself as a task that he would bring to an issue if he did nothing else during his stay in Harlem. And when he did learn the name of the man in the case he would compel him to do justice to the girl, even if it should require bloodshed to do it. He would not preach to him; preaching, he knew, would not reach such a man. He would —

His fist clinched instinctively.

There was something about the girl the minister could not understand. How the decision of character she seemed to show in shielding the man who had betrayed her could go hand in hand with the weakness that had caused her downfall he could not comprehend. Pliable in every other respect and almost worshipping the minister, always anxious to meet his slightest wish, in this one case that concerned her-

self most intimately she would take no advice from him, nor yet from Nellie who in other matters seemed to share with him her tenderest devotion. Arguments were futile, and she who in other matters reposed the most childlike trust in those whom she considered her benefactors, in this one case opposed her own judgment to theirs and faced the shame that in a country community is more acute than any other — to be a husbandless mother — rather than follow their advice.

“It ain’t him what I’m protecting,” she would say mildly, “but I don’t want to bring shame on others.”

“Nevertheless,” the minister told himself, “it’s ten to one it’s the man, and this is merely a dodge to throw us off the track — one of those queer self-sacrificing attachments that one reads of in sentimental novels, but that I have never before met with in real life; and then she does not read novels.”

With the supreme genius for kicking people who are down that even some Christians have, the people of Harlem, and among them some of Dominie Van Weelen’s own congregation, somehow connected the name of the minister with that of the unfortunate girl who was soon to pass into the valley of the shadow where all mothers go. Naturally, the rumor did not originate anywhere; it merely was, as such things have a habit of being. He had gone out of his way to help a fallen woman and had harbored her when even her own father had repudiated her; hence he must have some ulterior motive. There was

an element in the situation that the people of Harlem could not understand; therefore a few put an interpretation on it such as they could understand. They might have put a similar interpretation on the action of Christ if he had defied them to cast the first stone at a sinner.

"It's bad; it's awful," moaned Mrs. Zandbergen, "and him what can preach so good. But you can't always depend on preachin'."

"No, no," said a neighbor, "often you shall see it, them what has the smoothest tongues are the worst of all. Not that I mean to say that Dominie Van Weelen means bad —"

"No, no," broke in Mrs. Zandbergen, "I don't neither — far from it, but —"

"Yes, yes, I know," the neighbor hastened to say.

The rumor that the minister meant eventually to make the stay of Sarah Vissers at his home permanent was so fantastic that it did not reach his ears. It was one of those outrageously unreasonable bits of malicious gossip that only those who felt a glow of something like satisfaction when anything unfavorable to the minister was said credited and repeated. That Dominie Van Weelen should intend to marry a fallen woman was so absurd that those who wished him well could afford to laugh it down.

"But still he took her in when her own father cast her off," was the invariable answer. "Besides, who is she goin' to marry? Answer me that. It's got to be someone. If she did n't have something like that up her sleeve she'd tell the name of the

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real man quick enough, you can depend on that."

When Nellie returned from her visit to Oom Peter in De Stad one of the first bits of news her father imparted to her was,

"Dominie Van Weelen's goin' to marry Sarah Vissers."

It gave the old man keen pleasure to shock his daughter. He knew nothing of the idyll in the black-berry patch, but many a time Nellie had taken the part of Dominie Van Weelen against her father, and there was satisfaction in showing her her judgment had been wrong.

"That of course is ridiculous," she said with an assurance that maddened her father. The finality of the statement put all argument out of the question. Though this choice bit of gossip seeped through from other sources to Nellie she dismissed it with the same finality from her own mind as she had done to her father. Making a mountain out of a molehill was not a weakness of Nellie's. Moreover, she understood too well the minister's motives in giving shelter to the unfortunate girl to fall into the ridiculous mistake of the gossips of Harlem.

And yet there was a coldness in her heart toward her lover. It seemed that a chill had struck the "first fine careless rapture" of her passion and that the fire that had burned so fiercely at first had suddenly gone down. Nellie Harmdyk was one of those women whose mental balance is often the cause of a good deal of discomfort. In a moment of self-abnegating passion she had yielded herself to the arms

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of her mate. There were a few days of blissful air castle building, while the flood of romance retained its resistless sweep.

But the first reverse brought the inevitable questionings. The girl's normal mental balance asserted itself and would not be denied. It was all well and good to dream that the world was an idyll-world and that care is the invention of fools. When the first slight shock brought on the awakening her common sense told her there are hard facts to be met in this world and that wise men as well as fools are often beset with cares. From losing faith in the dream to doubting the wisdom of allowing herself to indulge in it was but a step.

When Dominie Van Weelen that Sunday morning after the services did not come up to speak to her Nellie did not at once deduce from this lack of interest on his part. She was too well balanced for that. But the fact remained that she was keenly disappointed, and disappointment made her think. When once started she decided she needed more time to think, and the next day found her at her uncle's for this purpose.

After all, looking at it in the cold light of reason, as she was now able to do, she decided she had been flighty. Any silly school girl can fall in love and she despised that particular brand of school girl. She knew the minister's name and that was about all. True, he had talked glibly about melting the snows of prejudice in Harlem and about the great work to be done in the "slums of the country."



But she remembered with vague discomfort having read in some novel or play of a plausible suitor imposing on a country girl. Or was not that the traditional plausible villain of a certain type of novel — the city man who takes advantage of the ignorance and innocence of the country girl? Nellie's cheeks burned as the thought took possession of her. The case was not an exact parallel, but was it not the mite of real similarity that was causing the blood to mount? She made a brave attempt at being strictly honest with herself.

An acquaintance of a few weeks; hostility as a starting point; a few platitudes about literature; a few more platitudes about social service that he might have gleaned from a three months' course in sociology in a correspondence school; a handsome face and taking ways — with such bait had she been caught. And her ambition to study the Psychology of the Romantic Movement — there was the sting of it. That ambition, which in the days when she had breathed the air of her own romance, had seemed so mean and unworthy, was resuming some of its original luster. And other ambitions came crowding back. They had all been pitifully trailed in the dust because she had lost her heart. Had she lost it? It seemed to her that if she had it would have been impossible to reason about it.

When Nellie finally returned home after her period of self-examination in De Stad she did so with the determination to be sensible in her love affair, if love affair it really was, and to subject her rela-

tions with Dominie Van Weelen to the cold tests of reason.

But Dominie Van Weelen failed to come to the Harmdyk home. He had accounted for Nellie's absence in his own way. He had thought it all out one day in the woods. For once the company of Baby Johannes jarred on him, and on some flimsy pretext the boy was put ashore and the minister paddled down the river in his canoe alone. He made peace with his conscience by promising himself he would compose somewhere in the groves that were God's first temples the sermon on which he could not concentrate his mind in his study.

Past the swimming hole with its familiar spring-board and diving swing, with its associations of a few weeks ago when he hurried hither for the sake of Sarah Vissers; beyond the big elm tree a mile further down; past the fork in the river a half a mile beyond; into the shadows of the wooded land, where the river became narrow and was obstructed often by fallen trees and overhanging brush — the minister paddled. A pleasing patch of sunshine breaking through the trees extended an invitation which he could not help but accept. Stretching himself on the grass he gave a sigh of relief. At last he was alone, free from all possibility of interruption.

The attempt at composing a sermon was a futile one, and crumpling the sheets of paper on which he had intended to write down his thoughts into a wad he threw it into the river. There was a peculiar pleasure for him in watching it drift slowly along

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with the stream — a trick the mind has of putting off issues that must be faced.

“Now let us see just exactly where I stand,” he said suddenly with decision, and the examination began. His first impression had been wrong; she was attached to her stern old father with a filial passion that he had not sufficiently considered. He had decided against that father; that was count number one against him. From that had flowed all the other troubles. It was perfectly clear to him why she had left Harlem suddenly. That it was to avoid meeting him he did not doubt; a few days before she had not intended to go. And then came the fight at the church door — an added straw that would count against him as soon as she should return.

“It’s as plain as the nose on my face. There is no definite engagement to be broken; I suppose at the time we considered the bond too holy to be put into words. She will merely make good on her intention of going back to school, and she is spending the balance of the vacation in De Stad to avoid unpleasant heroics. Well, it looks now as though I might not last long here anyway, and after that, well —”

He did not finish the thought. For the moment there was no fight left in him. His was a strong nature clashing with something that it could not cope with, and that for the moment made all effort in all lines seem futile and unnecessary. Later his fighting blood was to be aroused again; but for the present he felt helpless.

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His arms ached for her and there was a line over his shoulder where her arm had encircled him that still tingled from the pressure of her cool clear skin against it. But he put the remembrance away from him and the world was cold and gray.

That night in his study he forced himself to write a sermon. After all, the work of the world must go on even though the light of life has been denied. In lieu of real inspiration a congregation must still be fed. Work does not brook the interruptions that the vicissitudes of love's young dream bring on, any more than the stock exchange shuts down when the young broker is so affected. But Dominie Van Weelen despised himself for turning out hack-work.

"It's lacking from start to finish," he commented. "The doctrine is there but the heart is wanting. I'll cut this conclusion short. I can disguise the want in the argumentative parts, but in the direct appeal it is harder."

When Nellie returned from De Stad Dominie Van Weelen found no opportunity of seeing her. The Harmdyk home was closed to him. He waited for a chance meeting. His fighting blood had returned and he decided to put the case before her as he himself saw it.

When they did meet his greeting from her was a coldly polite "How do you do," and the words he had come to say froze on his lips. Nellie was subjecting their intimacy to the cold light of reason combined with a slight touch of pique. He who had not overcome all obstacles to speak to her when she

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came to his church must find his own way of speaking to her now if he so desired. He raised his hat; then he stood looking after her.

“No, she does not want me to follow.”

How spotlessly neat she always looks, was his thought. But those wonderful eyes had been cold and there had been no invitation in the voice. He stood baffled. Perhaps a more opportune time would offer itself.

The scandal about the fight at the church door was still the subject of gossip at Harlem when Nellie returned and oftentimes she was compelled to take the minister's part against his detractors. If it could have been reported to him how often she had lost her temper on this much discussed subject he might have changed his mind about her not wanting him to follow her. In fact, she easily lost her temper after the return home. The process of subjecting her love affair to the cold light of reason did not work out as satisfactorily as she had anticipated. Perhaps the silly school girls were not so silly after all; perhaps there was some deep psychological reason for classing the “lunatic, the lover and the poet” in the same category.

Ezra had been moody and morose ever since Nellie's return. His state of mind gave the girl an almost unchristian pleasure. She was human enough to enjoy his discomfiture, and to anyone not obsessed with preconceived notions about the light of reason this would have been proof sufficient that her passion had not been conquered.

## The Cold Light of Reason 315

The fight at the church door was not discussed in the Harmdyk home, and Nellie naturally attributed Ezra's unusual moodiness to the bitterness of defeat. It seemed unsportsmanlike to her that he should mope after having been trounced in a fair fight even if the victor was a minister. Not only did she defend Dominie Van Weelen openly; secretly she imagined how he would have conducted himself in case he had been beaten. But in spite of all she clung to her light of reason theory.

"It seems to me you might take it like a man," she said impatiently to her brother one day. Somewhat to her surprise he did not fly into the rage she was prepared for.

"Don't say that, Nell," he answered, the old time gruffness considerably mitigated by a something new in his voice that his sister had never suspected could be there. It was almost a plea for mercy.

"It's got on my nerves," she said, with a suggestion of kindness in her voice. "I like to see a man who is beaten take his defeat with some kind of spirit."

Ezra did not answer the implied indictment of his manhood. But there was a look in his eyes, a mute look of pleading, that strangely stirred his sister. Though in theory she despised a man who allowed his spirit to be broken, somehow when a concrete case was before her it stirred her pity. He stood for all the world like a perplexed child with a helplessness in his bearing that was in marked contrast to his former self-assurance.

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"*He* must hit pretty hard," she thought, and the thought stirred her pride.

Baby Johannes artlessly told her the story of the prevented lawsuit. It put Ezra in an entirely new light. Instantly she repented of her harsh judgment of him.

"I am sorry I talked to you the way I did yesterday, Ezra," she said by way of reparation; "Baby Johannes has been telling me about father going to see a lawyer."

A sudden look of gratitude leaped into the eyes of the youth that surprised his sister still more. It came to her with a sudden force that he was different. Like Baby Johannes, she felt for the first time in years that there was a bond between her and Ezra. There were once more in his bearing suggestions of the boy who had tenderly put his arm under his dying mother's head and who had stirred her pride even in those closing hours. Were there possibilities of sympathies in him that she had not suspected; and while seeking romance in a movement of the past, had she neglected a richness of human relationship at home? At the back of her mind there was a vague uneasiness that she was the sport of forces she did not understand and that her neat theories were subject to revision.

The words of the minister came back to her —

"I suspect there are possibilities in him; but it will do no good to preach to him. And if mere preaching would bring out his possibilities they would n't be worth much."

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Had this minister then, who could talk as entertainingly on pre-Shakespearian drama as on theology, such a rich fund of sympathy that he had at the very beginning discovered the *soul* of Ezra while she, his sister, had remained blind to it? She felt her theories tumbling about her ears; but with a further instinct toward caution, she groped after the resurrected finer sensibilities of the boy which she believed she had divined.

"What made you do it, Ezra?" she asked. Strange that she could ask this question. A few weeks ago it would have been impossible. The very question marked a new relationship between brother and sister and Ezra was quick to feel the new ground.

"I hated him — just simply hated him, Nell!"

"But why?"

Ezra stood with eyes downcast, in confusion, and did not answer.

"He never preached to you?" she asked feeling about for a possible reason.

"No, I ain't afraid of their talkin'; but, I don't know, I just hated him. He just made me feel that way — and — and —" again he stopped in confusion. His untrained tongue could not put into words the instinctive antipathy there had been between the minister's straightforward manhood and the boy's sordidness. And then there was another reason that Nellie could not guess.

"Nell," he said falteringly and in confusion, "would you do something for me?" Again it struck her that it was nothing short of remarkable



that such a question could come from Ezra. "After all," she thought, "there is a good deal of the boy left in him that mother loved."

"Why certainly, Ezra, you know I will."

"I thought maybe — as — how — I mean, I thought you might see him some time — and then you know he would believe it if you told him — I don't feel so bad because he licked me; first I did but it ain't so bad to be licked by a minister who — a minister — like him. But that ain't what I was goin' to say. I mean —"

"Do you mean you want me to make him feel you are sorry?" she helped him out.

"Yes, but it ain't that either; that is, that ain't all. He thinks I'm a bully and a coward — and — and — I guess I am, but can't you tell him I feel different now — that I was wrong to hate him just because he was strong and at the same time good."

The words thrilled the girl as no eulogy of her lover could have done. There was something motherly in her assurance to the boy that she would put him right with the minister.

"And say, Nell, do you think that —" He stopped in confusion as though he had caught himself in a false position. Pale and trembling he gave Nellie the impression that he was laboring under something that was too much for him. This seemed all the more incongruous in view of the stammering confessions he had just made.

"Yes, Ezra?" she said softly.

"It's no use, Nell; you need n't say anything to

the minister from me. I—I—a—forgot. It's no use—no use." He seemed to be thinking aloud.

Not another word could the girl get out of him and though his sudden change of front was an inexplicable puzzle she had to be content to wait for a more opportune time. His face remained clouded in settled gloom.

"Quite a joke that father should go and see a lawyer," she said lightly possessed by a desire to drive the gloom away.

A wan smile for a moment broke to the surface, but before Nellie left him he was again standing in an attitude of gloomy dejection that puzzled her.

"Not in a mood for humor just now," she thought, "but then, Ezra never had much of a sense of humor, any more than father has.—Moreover, that's the Dutch of it!"

But this phrase brought on a train of thought that led her far afield. She forgot about her father's absurd attempt to have the minister arrested and his still more absurd inconsistency in going to see a lawyer.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BABY JOHANNES UNDERSTANDS

**T**HE first suggestion of the abatement of the summer's heat was in the air and at night Baby Johannes no longer restlessly kicked off the comforters. In the morning he winced just a little when his feet first touched the hard rough floor of his bedroom; or rather of Ezra's bedroom, for in the Harmdyk household the rights of seniority were religiously respected. Starting with that first morning after the fight at the church door Ezra refrained from jerking the covers off his brother. In lieu of this he said gruffly, "Come, Baby Johannes, hurry up," at four o'clock in the morning when the well-known voice of Jan shouting "Ezra-ra-a," ascended the stairway.

The boys were about ready for bed. The heat of the early September day had given way and Ezra carefully closed the window for fear of a draught during the night. A critical moment in the life of Baby Johannes had come. He had awakened in the middle of the night sometimes thinking that the inevitable struggle between his will and the will of his burly brother was on about the open window. On other questions he would yield immediately as a matter of course, but sleeping near an open window

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had become a religion with him and he was determined to defend it as a fanatic does his creed. Dominie Van Weelen had made him promise, and it would have been nothing short of disloyalty to his hero to yield on this point.

"I'd like to keep the window open, Ezra," he said timidly from the bed.

"*Na*, it's gettin' cold nights."

"But it's good to have it open; then you don't get consumption," argued Baby Johannes.

"I ain't afraid of gettin' consumption. It's gettin' too cold to have the window open. It's pretty warm up here now, but it'll get colder during the night. I caught a cold last night and I ain't goin' to have it again."

"But the open window don't make you catch cold," again argued Baby Johannes; and he went into the science of ventilation, repeating to his brother the elementary principles taught him by the minister.

Baby Johannes was enthusiastic. For the moment an open window seemed to him the most important matter in life; he felt he would stifle if it remained closed. He felt a pain coming on under his breast-bone — doubtless the dreaded consumption was already laying hold on him.

"Aw, go on," said Ezra; "I always slept with my window shut and I never got consumption; and father — look how strong he is and he keeps his window shut even when it's hot."

This was a poser for Baby Johannes but the fact that Ezra condescended to argue the point instead of

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arbitrarily telling him to "shut up" encouraged the boy.

"Well, Dominie says it's so," he said, "and he ought to know."

Ezra did not answer for a moment.

"And he keeps it open winter and summer?" he asked finally.

"All the time," said Baby Johannes eagerly, "even when the snow comes blowing in."

Ezra involuntarily shuddered. Baby Johannes again went into the mysteries of the science of ventilation, Ezra occasionally putting in a question.

"Hey! keep still up there," shouted Jan Harmdyk at the foot of the stair, and Baby Johannes ducked his head under the covers.

There was silence for a few minutes; then Baby Johannes plucked up courage to whisper:

"Ezra, I want the window open."

"Are you sure Dominie told you it is good to have it open?" whispered the older boy.

"Sure!" said Baby Johannes out loud forgetting for a moment in his enthusiasm the command of his father.

"Well, then, I'll try it," answered Ezra and Baby Johannes bounded out of bed.

Suddenly relieved of the worrying strain of the argument Ezra became heavy-eyed and he only faintly heard his little brother rattle the small panes as he opened the window.

Baby Johannes stood looking out upon the landscape. There was still a red glow in the west and the

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air seemed to shimmer dreamily before the boy's eyes. The light was perceptibly fading from the world and in the far distance the eternal chirp of the crickets in the marshes could be heard.

"Bet the water is warm tonight," he whispered to himself. "It always is when the sun is down. Dominie says it ain't really warmer than during the day but feels warmer because the air is cooler."

He could see the clump of trees that surrounded the church. Beyond was the parsonage, and in his mind's eye he could see his hero sitting in his little study writing with that beautiful fountain pen of his.

Suddenly from this picture his mind flashed back to his sister's room across the hall. She was sitting in her rocker with her back to the student's lamp on the table, reading one of those beautiful little volumes with the soft maroon covers.

"She always reads little books"—almost articulating the words—"Father reads big ones when he reads, but they are Dutch, maybe that's why."

Back flashed his thoughts to the minister in his study; perhaps he was now rehearsing his sermon, as Baby Johannes had heard him do at one time. Then he came back to his idolized sister rocking gently and turning the pages. A vague uneasiness stole over him. She had not been the same since returning from Oom Peter. And Dominie Van Weelen had left him and gone off alone in the canoe. The flimsy excuse had hardly deceived the boy. He had gone ashore without protest because he would as soon have thought of protesting against a direct command

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from heaven as dispute the minister's word. And yesterday Nellie had spoken of going back to school whereas before going to De Stad she had told him one day in a burst of affection that she would never leave him again. A feeling of having been deserted stole over the boy.

Always to live with Nellie! That was an alluring prospect. But what if the minister should move away? Some ministers had not remained longer in Harlem than five years, and his father had quarreled with Dominie Van Weelen. The boy was in a panic at the prospect. If the minister and Nellie and he could only always be together, that would be Arcadia indeed.

"I'll see what Nellie says about it tomorrow," he consoled himself.

He shivered as a light gust of air struck his naked little body. Climbing carefully over Ezra he drew the covers over himself and gave himself over to the luxury of undisturbed sleep.

"Nellie," he said the next morning, "you ain't goin' back to college, are you?"

"I have not quite decided, Baby," she answered sweetly. "You are anxious to have me go, are n't you?" she continued smiling.

For answer the boy flung his arms about her neck and clung to her with a passion that brought the tears to her eyes. Her protecting, almost maternal, love responding to his, she drew him to her and kissed the thin little face to which the brown of summer gave its one token of health.

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"Would you like to go with me if I should go away?" she asked presently. Recently some such plan had taken form in her mind. A position as teacher of English in one of the colleges or high schools, she thought, would yield about enough to keep her and educate the boy at the same time. That Baby Johannes did not jump at the prospect hurt her.

He looked up at her doubtfully, as though trying to decide whether the question had been put in jest or earnest.

"But Dominie can't go yet," he finally objected.

The girl was startled for a moment and a deep flush overspread her face. Surely the minister could not have told their secret to a mere child.

"Well, he could stay here," she said with a harshness in her voice.

The boy drew away from his sister as though he suddenly found something repugnant in her. The gesture was more eloquent than words could possibly have been.

"So you don't want to come with me alone?" she asked. There was a feeling akin to jealousy in her heart.

Baby Johannes did not answer. Those who think that in childhood there are no battles to fight have forgotten their own youth. Should he abandon the minister now that all others were turning on him? On the other hand, how could he once more lose his sister-mother? The call of the canoe and the river was strong upon him; and yet, to feel the soft hand



that was now resting on his head no more would be sharp torture. He twisted one bare toe over another and sat staring wide-eyed. The irreconcilables of life were upon him.

Feeling certain now that her secret had not been guessed by her little brother Nellie was more at ease and pressed an answer to her question. For the moment her light of reason theory seemed mean. The loyalty of the boy was a more complete answer to her doubts than a thousand books of philosophy could have given her. Who ever heard of falling in love by a system?

Baby Johannes had been thinking hard. Unable to let *her* go and just as much unable to leave *him* he must find the way out.

"But why don't you stay here?" he repeated insistently when she pressed him for an answer to her question.

Why not indeed? The child had put a question that she could not answer. There was no use telling him she had work to do in the world. A few weeks ago her work had seemed in Harlem and she did not care to make her answer a deliberate lie.

"Don't you like Dominie any more?" he ventured. His father's displeasure had not quite explained to the boy the minister's persistent refusal to come to the farm and Nellie's persistent refusal to go where she would be liable to meet the minister.

Nellie again flushed deeply. Just what significance did the boy attach to the "any more"?

"Did you think I ever liked him?"

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"Did n't you?" asked Baby Johannes incredulously, looking into her eyes for an answer.

The light in her eyes told the tale even to the untutored mind of Baby Johannes. Reason and common sense and the demands of intellect and all the other safeguards that the girl had conjured up at Oom Peter's in De Stad were swept aside as the old passion again took complete possession of her. To hear the sound of his voice, to feel again his arms about her, to feel his lips pressed upon her own made her senses flutter with the intoxicating prospect. Foolish now seemed her narrow reasoning about not having known him long enough. Baby Johannes had been wiser than she and had yielded with childlike faith to the essential manhood and loveliness of the minister, while she had spent the time in answerless questionings.

"You do like him, don't you, Nellie?" he said with more assurance as with a grimy finger he touched the dimple in her chin. For answer she hugged him to her and kissed him on the lips. When she raised her head her eyes were shiny with tears. Wonderingly, yet with a new found joy in his heart, the boy slid to the floor.

There was only one way. They had avoided each other lately. Instinctively the boy felt that whatever chasm there was between his sister and his hero must be bridged. If the old relations of the summer could be reestablished she would remain in Harlem. He did not reason it all out clearly, but something told him that was the solution of all his questionings.

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Boyhood intuition interpreted to him in this way his sister's eyes shining with tears.

He must find a way; and setting his little brain to work his feet kept time on their way to the river. A few more weeks and the college would open, taking his sister away unless he could find some way of re-establishing the ties that a few weeks before had caused her to say she would never again leave him.

Having passed a sleepless night Dominie Van Weelen was once more unable to concentrate his mind on his work. Nellie's cold "How do you do?" haunted him. Baby Johannes had informed him that Nellie was thinking of returning to college; but this only confirmed what had become almost a certainty in his mind. Once or twice he had made up his mind to write and ask for a direct understanding, but there seemed something almost boyishly cowardly in resorting to writing when she lived only half a mile from his door.

"'Then sanctification comes and the whole man is renewed.'" He read the last sentence he had written.

"All rot," he said in disgust; "I can't get into the spirit of it this morning. Something wrong with the spark-plug, as it were."

Throwing down the pen he took his hat and was off to the river. The canoe drifted lightly on the sluggish stream, and an occasional touch of the paddle was all that was necessary to direct its course. In his preoccupation Dominie Van Weelen hardly

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noticed whither he was going, and when the frail craft grated harshly on the gravel he woke to his surroundings with a start. Jumping upon the beach he threw out the iron weight that served him as an anchor.

Almost dreamily recognizing the tall maple tree as a familiar object he stretched himself on the grass where the shade was the deepest. Gradually the low crooning of summer insects did what a soft bed had failed to do the previous night, and not even the sun traveling higher and shining into his face could disturb his sound sleep. Little beads of perspiration formed on his temples and the light gusts of breeze that now and again dried them also made the canoe bob up and down on the river.

There Baby Johannes found him. Stretching out his hands the child was about to cover the minister's eyes with his fingers to make him guess who it was, when a sudden thought arrested the movement. He stood for a moment looking down on the sleeping figure and dug his big toe into the soft earth thoughtfully. Then he tiptoed- with exaggerated caution away from the place and as soon as he had gained the path ran at top speed to the house.

Breathless and flushed with the exertion he ran in upon Nellie who still sat where the boy had left her a half hour ago. She was thinking, and she started as from a reverie when Baby Johannes burst into the room.

"Come on, Nellie, let's go out in the canoe. You said last week you'd go with me sometime."

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"Where's your canoe?" she asked mildly interested.

"I've got it right at the end of our path."

"Are you sure you can handle a canoe?" she asked playfully.

"Can I?" he boasted. "Dominie Van Weelen learned me that and I can do it almost as good as him."

Partly not to disappoint the eager pleasure she saw it would give the boy and partly to find relief from the perplexing thoughts that haunted her, she yielded. Baby Johannes ran eagerly ahead down the path and she followed hatless, and wearing a dress that in Harlem was looked upon as splendid, but which at college already had outlived its usefulness. The people of the neighborhood looked upon it as rather questionable. The neck was cut low — low enough so that her neck was exposed. A tiny pink ribbon was threaded through the equally tiny loops. Instead of the long "puffed" sleeves that were still "in" in Harlem the sleeves of Nellie's dress reached only from the shoulder to the elbow, exposing the forearm, white and cool. It was a dress designed to give the greatest possible degree of comfort in hot weather; but to the people of Harlem comfort was secondary in the matter of clothes.

Suddenly Baby Johannes stopped short in the path.

"What's the matter now?"

"I forgot my paddle," he said. His eyes were downcast as though he was ashamed of something. "You know, Dominie made me a paddle that was

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small enough for me, and I left it in the woodshed."

Nellie remembered having seen the paddle there. Baby Johannes stood irresolute in the path.

"Well, if you don't hurry I'll go off alone in the canoe," she bantered and Baby Johannes bounded down the path homeward.

"There is a sensitiveness in that boy that I cannot understand," she mused as she slowly walked on. "Now just why he should be ashamed of having forgotten to take his paddle seems queer. He looked as though he had committed a crime."

She smiled as the picture of the downcast look of the boy came back to her. The patter of the bare little feet was dying away in the distance. Walking slowly so that he might be able to overtake her, Nellie approached the end of the path.

From behind a clump of weeds Baby Johannes made sure that she was not waiting for him. Then he ran to the barn and climbed a ladder to the hay loft where he would have a view of the bend in the river.

"Dominie will give her a ride in the canoe," he said with inward satisfaction. He no longer blushed for the lie about the forgotten paddle; besides, the blush had been merely a matter of embarrassment and not a matter of conscience.

She suddenly came upon *him* stretched out upon the grass — arms bare to the elbow — coat rolled up for a pillow, face fair and good in the morning sunshine, strong, manly muscles twitching occasionally under the thin summer shirt. She stood there for a few moments looking down upon him — no longer an

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object of questionings and doubts but once more her lover who had made her pulses beat fast with the desire that a pure healthy woman feels for the mate who is strong and healthy and full of the wine of life. In a moment all doubts were swept away, and the old yearning returned with an irresistible force.

The man opened his eyes when the woman's lips lightly touched his forehead. He looked up wonderingly; then, comprehending, he took her in his arms and beat kisses upon her eyes and lips and cheeks and throat, and mingled passionate words of endearment with her joyous breathless laughter.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### HOME LOST AND FOUND

A FEW moments later they were talking seriously. He was pleading with a passion she found it hard to resist.

"But, dear, what will people say?" she urged in defense of her attitude.

"Is it only talk that you are afraid of?" he asked almost severely.

There was the unexplained period of the "light of reason," and the girl winced when he put the matter that way.

"No," she said, "but you are a minister — you can't — you must n't — oh, Charlie, a minister!"

There was real distress in her voice, but remembering the weeks of unexplained absence in De Stad at Oom Peter's, Dominie Van Weelen hardened his heart against the unexpressed appeal.

"You admitted a moment ago you loved me. Did you learn to love me because I am a minister or because I am a man?"

She did not think it necessary to answer.

"Well, then," he continued with inexorable logic, logic that left nothing to be desired even by an advocate of the light of reason theory like Nellie, "I was a man before I was a minister, and I hope my



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work need never make me less of a man. It it does it is sinful and degrading and I'll give it up."

Nellie looked horrified.

"But it does n't, dearest, it does n't, and you must n't either," he pleaded.

"But, Charles," she said, with a woman's practical instinct, "they will expel you from the church."

"There is other work than this," he persisted doggedly. At this juncture he could brook no matters of practical bread-and-butter consideration. The confidence of youth and strength was strong upon him, and he would find a home for his mate some way.

"It is n't that, dear," she said softly; "I was thinking of your career, of your work in the 'slums of the country' as you called them. I could n't bear to have you give up your plans."

But during the last few weeks he had learned that these plans, apart from her, were dreary and impossible. It was partly because he wanted to keep the flame burning in his heart that he would not let her go.

"Give me a few weeks to think it over," she said, and the way she said it told him that she had made up her mind. But he would not capitulate. Unreasonable suspicions of why she had gone to Oom Peter's in De Stad flashed into his mind, which he was too much of a strong man to give expression to. If he gave her more weeks to think it over he knew his doom. With the fierce desire of him who knows his own love has been eternally fixed he was willing to

rob the possible rival in De Stad. The usual maxims of playing fair he swept impatiently from his mind. They were the invention of little minds that could not begin to comprehend his priority of right to the woman who loved him. For the time being he was not the minister of a stern denominational church, but the man claiming his mate against all odds and ready to fight for her possession to the death if need be.

Under ordinary circumstances Nellie would have been more than a match for him. But the "light of reason" period fought on his side. She curiously distrusted herself. Not for a million kingdoms would she have bartered the love that was now welling up in her heart and transforming the world into a place of glory for the doubts that had held her at Oom Peter's in De Stad.

"But why not wait?" she said less decidedly.

"Nothing could be gained by it. Knowing your father as you do you cannot possibly hope to gain his consent. The break must come at some time. Then why not take the shortest cut and meet the issue frankly without any preliminary skirmishing whatever?"

"But Charles, be reasonable," she smiled to break the tension of his passion; "I have no clothes — could not possibly become a bride so precipitately as you suggest."

"I thought you were big enough to rise above that," he said.

"A real woman is never big enough to rise above

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loving pretty clothes — especially her wed — wedding gown,” she faltered.

The words were spoken banteringly, and Dominie Van Weelen understood the tone was assumed to discourage him. He could not know that the banter was as much a defense against herself as against him. Manlike he remained on the surface of things and did not fathom the depths that were in her.

The minister’s face assumed a look of determination that Nellie had learned to understand clearly.

“You are right, Nellie,” he said at last. “It will be better to avoid haste; but not because I am a minister, dear. Why should I, loving you as I do, be supposed to be governed by laws of conduct different from those that govern any other man who loves a woman? I am not a man apart, and I am glad I am not. Just because I happen to have taken a theological course in a school does not put a halo about me. It cannot be wrong for a man and a woman who love one another to take a short cut and pledge their vows without the usual trumpery. But I suppose delay will make it easier for you, and I suppose it will be better to wait.”

She did not answer. With strange contrariness she liked him better when he did not yield. Now that she had gained her point she half wished he had not yielded. The fire in his eyes thrilled her and she wanted to be wanted passionately.

“But I am going with you right now,” he said slowly and deliberately, “and tell your father of our intentions.”

"Oh, no, no," she cried in alarm.

"You have no illusions, Nellie, about his yielding. He will never give us his blessing and our marriage will not end in the conventional way. You know he is implacable and his attitude will be the same if we tell him today or next year."

She could not deny this. "I know," she said weakly, "but I hoped — I thought maybe — I would so much like to avoid further trouble between you and him. It's your work I am thinking of — and mine," she added softly.

"I know, Nellie," he said tenderly, "but for this once you must trust my instinct. Always I have found it best to go straight for an object, and too much putting off and dallying create doubt and a dimming of vision. Do not think for a moment that it is pleasant for me to plunge into a wrangle with your father, for a wrangle it is sure to be. But it must be at some time, and it is best that it should be now. And then in your own good time you will come to me."

"I will come," she said.

Dominie Van Weelen knew but too well what the result of his interview with Jan Harmdyk would be. And he knew all too well also how the marriage which would inevitably have to be solemnized without the consent of Nellie's father would be received by the people of his church. The day of the New Woman had not yet dawned in Harlem, and the women religiously kept their hats on in church because St. Paul had said something about it not being seemly for a

woman to appear in public with head uncovered. A Harlem woman would as soon have thought of making light of the clause in the marriage form which enjoins the woman to obey her husband, as she would have thought of making light of one of the Thirty-nine Articles. A girl who defied her father and married a man in spite of his commands was somehow classed with the women who were looked at askance, who were made to feel that there is such a thing as social ostracism even in the country. And the man who married such a woman was usually classed with the mysterious but terribly wicked element in the cities — the element that did not scruple to patronize theaters and dance halls.

Any minister might think twice before subjecting himself to the danger of being thus classified by his parishioners through deliberate act of his own. Dominie Van Weelen saw all this and he would gladly have avoided it, but there was no other way.

Ordeal though the meeting with Jan Harmdyk was likely to prove the minister could not help but remember with a smile of amusement that to most of the young swains of Harlem "asking her parents" was fully as much of an ordeal even when the parents were not hostile. John or Jake or William had perhaps been courting Grace or Maggie or Hattie for three or four years. He had visited at the girl's home hundreds of times. He had been on perfectly intimate terms with the father, the mother, and all the brothers and sisters. He had eaten innumerable meals with the family. He had been jokingly re-

ferred to by the members of the family, again and again, as the future son-in-law. The parents had known and he had known that they knew that the betrothal had taken place years ago. It had all become a matter of fact. But that did not release him from the necessity of telling her parents and asking their consent, and usually did not make the ordeal any the less terrible.

He would dress his best some week-day evening and drive over to pass the evening with her. Through judicious hints from the daughter the parents had been led to guess the special purpose of his visit. The younger children, who often almost intuitively had sensed that something unusual was afoot, were packed off to bed amidst mysterious and excited gigglings from the girls and disdainful silence from the boys. The parents, the daughter, and her swain would linger discussing religion perhaps or the relative merits of clay and sand during a wet summer.

After the bedtime of the parents had come and gone and the father had frankly yawned several times and the mother had served coffee, the girl would begin to cast expressive glances in the direction of the prospective husband and he would begin making a mighty resolve to speak. And in due time with much hemming and hawing he would deliver himself of the statement that their daughter and himself — “me and Gertie,” he would put it — having agreed to take one another for better or for worse, he now respectfully asked that they give their consent. The father would then sagely stroke his beard, clear his

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throat two or three times and say, "*Ja*, I guess maybe that would be all right"; and the mother and daughter, for some mysterious reason would smile at each other through unshed tears.

A picture of all this Dominie Van Weelen had at the back of his mind when he stepped up to Jan Harmdyk as the latter emerged from the barn. The thunder clouds gathered on the farmer's face when he saw the minister, but Dominie Van Weelen approached with unfaltering step.

"I have come to ask you for the hand of your daughter," he said simply and waited.

Jan Harmdyk was dumfounded. That in spite of his quarrel with the minister a daughter of his — even a daughter with Nellie's independence — should have the temerity to keep up any kind of relations with Dominie Van Weelen was matter enough for transcending astonishment; but that she should dare to become "engaged" to his special foe was unthinkable. And that the minister should have the audacity to ask such a question from him was almost more than the farmer could grasp all at once.

Without answering the minister he shouted:

"Nell, come here."

Nellie emerged from the house and came slowly walking up the path that led to the barn. She did not relish the inevitable scene.

"What for a girl are you anyway?" he shouted at her before she had reached the place where they were standing. "Did n't I tell you that we would n't have nothing more to do with this hypocrite?"

Instinctively again Dominie Van Weelen's fists closed and thrills of conscious physical power leaped along his arms. But with more effort than it would have taken to beat a strong man into insensibility he repressed the impulse to strike and gave Nellie a reassuring look.

"Not a favorable beginning," he thought, "but nothing very different from what I had anticipated."

"I never agreed to any such thing," said Nellie in an effort to keep from rousing the old man's anger to the extreme.

Here again was something out of Jan's usual line of mental vision. That an agreement should be necessary between father and daughter, where the former had commanded, was to him unthinkable.

"Well, I'm tellin' you now for the last time," he said with more self-command than either the minister or Nellie had expected from him.

Not a word had Jan said to Dominie Van Weelen and apparently he did not intend to answer the minister's question. The latter therefore repeated it.

"I ask you again for the hand of your daughter. I know of course what your answer will be but I would like nevertheless to have you say it."

Jan Harndyk merely spat upon the grass at his feet, and for answer gave the minister a look of unutterable contempt.

Nellie stood trembling, all her usual self-possession lost in anxiety about the effect this scene and its inevitable outcome would have upon the minister's work in his chosen field.



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"I take your silence to mean 'no,' of course," said the minister at last. "Nellie is old enough to know her own mind, however, and she cannot be expected to throw away her happiness because of an arbitrary command. Though wishing to show all possible respect to you we have decided to be married and I suppose it will have to be without your consent."

"Is that so, Nell?" Jan asked sternly, still failing to address the minister directly.

"Yes, father," she said softly.

It was usual for Jan Harmdyk to fly into a rage whenever his will was crossed. But perhaps he saw that nothing he could do or say would change the relations of these two people toward him and hence understood the futility of all blustering anger.

"It will never be in my house," he said quite calmly but with determination.

"I hardly expected that it would," answered the minister, determined to keep his hold on the conversation in spite of being ignored by the old man.

This roused Jan Harmdyk to sudden anger.

"And you don't stay in my house another hour," he roared at Nellie, "no, not another minute. You get out bag and baggage and go to your hypocrite of a minister — to your wolf in sheep's clothing."

Even at the time, in spite of what the words meant to them, the minister and Nellie could not help but feel the theatricality of this speech. And both knew that though thousands of novels had said and repeated the same speech, for Jan, who had never dreamed of falling so low as to read a novel, it was

the same as though he had been the first parent in the shadowy annals of folklore who had thus threatened his daughter.

"That means, Nellie —"

"That I will come," she interrupted him softly.

Without another word Jan turned back into the barn. Implacable himself he felt that it would be useless to argue with his daughter. Moreover he was not in the habit of arguing but rather of commanding.

"He means it literally, I suppose," said the minister.

"Yes, that door is closed to me."

"What will you do?"

"What can I do? If it were not for its effect on you and your work it would be simple enough."

"What do you mean?" he asked eagerly.

"I would frankly and fully give myself to you now," she said without embarrassment or confusion.

"Then nothing shall keep you from doing it," he said with determination. "It may hurt our work but any other course we should follow would hurt it as well. Always I have found it better in the end to face a situation rather than try to evade it. Will you come — now?"

She hesitated for a few moments. Then she looked into his eyes bravely and said once again:

"I will come."

She went into the house and a short time later emerged carrying her suit case and wearing the dainty white dress that the minister had once told her he

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liked. She looked around for Baby Johannes to kiss him good-by, but the boy was not to be found. Sadly but with no hesitation she turned with the minister to the river.

He gently helped her into the waiting canoe. Responding to the long steady strokes of the paddle, the light craft bounded over the water, leaving tiny ripples on the sluggish surface and speeding on its journey to De Stad, six miles away.

That evening in De Stad Dominie Van Weelen slowly and solemnly repeated the words after the gray-haired Methodist minister who held the prayer-book, "till death do us part," and Nellie, almost inaudibly and fearfully said, "I do."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE IMPENDING SHADOW

**D**AWN was about to tinge the eastern sky with a faint pallor, but as yet the stars above the horizon trembled in undisturbed brilliancy. An almost preternatural quiet reigned just before the chorus would break forth at the first breaking in of the light. Wrapped in the stupor of the last watch of the night, the inhabitants of the barnyard did not flutter and shift uneasily as they had done a few hours earlier. Even the insects had yielded to the god of sleep. The marshes along the river did not resound and fairly vibrate with the song of the crickets — the sound that the minister had learned to associate with evening twilight.

Something in this unaccustomed sense of quiet stole over Dominie Van Weelen as he lay staring into the darkness. His eyes opened dreamily and the lids closed again involuntarily. He was about to climb some dizzy precipice when, with a slight start, he again opened his eyes, this time a little wider. But once more sleep was too much for him and the lids drooped. The effort to keep them open fairly hurt the eyeballs, and as if to lessen the smart the lids once more were drawn together. He breathed deeply once, twice, and then again, and the cool morning air

inflating his lungs seemed to steal away something of the weariness from his body. Presently he was wide awake.

Faint impressions of resurrecting life began traveling millionfold along the nerve threads to the brain. Presently the little panes in the window began "to grow into glimmering squares," and in the barnyard the chorus was breaking forth. Out in the fields horses sighed heavily — involuntary premonitions of the taking up of the burdens of the day. The intermittent sounds that broke in upon the sleepers in the little parsonage were the familiar challenges which each morning called the minister to the glad activities of the day — the day that would make him ever again conscious of the rich blood coursing through his veins, and that would make his heart stout for the struggle. He merely lay drinking in the glory of being alive, watching the little wooden demarcations of the window slowly becoming more pronounced.

Down upon him suddenly rushed the consciousness of what he had done. He tried for a moment to leave Nellie out of the picture that began to haunt him, but as well try to stop thinking of her altogether. Practically against her better judgment he had made her the wife of one who was likely to become an outcast in the community — and all the more so, he thought with sudden apprehension, because of that marriage. Perhaps tomorrow he would be a dismal failure in his chosen work, with no means of supplying for the beautiful creature by his side the thou-

sand things that she would enjoy. For the first time in his life he longed for wealth and he wished that somehow miraculously he might find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. There was nothing that she did not deserve, and how little was it he could give! How could he ever expect to retain the love of the radiant one unless he could bribe her with trinkets that women love? In his present state of self-abnegating love he could almost have committed crime if it could have ensured forever the love that he yearned for with every fiber in his body.

For the moment the future looked bleak, bleaker than it usually does to one of his sanguine temperament. Forgotten now were the fears of losing her that had driven him to impulsive action the day before. It seemed madness, sheer madness, to have run into it this way. Why go against the prejudices and traditions of the countryside that formed the scene of his labors? Why had he not taken time to consider? Perhaps he might have discovered a more conventional way, so that his wife would at least have been assured a welcome from his parishioners? Too late he saw now that he had impulsively rushed himself and Nellie into an unenviable position.

The picture of how the people would look upon the marriage struck him with a sharp pang. It was not for himself he grieved; for the first time he experienced to the full the responsibility of love. He clenched his right hand on the coverlet.

“If they dare say anything about her!”

But the futility of the gesture and of the thought

struck him with a force that left him almost frightened.

"I'm making mountains out of mole-hills," he said in a whisper; "it's time for me to get up and get a grip on myself. Nothing can be gained by lying here thinking of what is going to happen. I'll be up and doing, and, please God, make the way smooth for her!"

Some time later he stood looking down at Nellie quietly sleeping.

"After all," he thought, "if the sacrifice be required, the ministry is not the only way in which I can be worthy of her — and serve God." This last almost as an after-thought. In his present frame of mind there seemed nothing irreverent in making God an after-thought. The sleeping woman was the embodiment of all the holiest aspirations of his nature.

Opening her eyes she smiled into his.

"Dearest, it is morning," he said simply.

"Oh, is n't it wonderful!" was her answer.

"I hear Mrs. Wachs stirring in the kitchen," he said presently. "In an hour it will be breakfast time. I shall have to ask her to lay another cover; or would you like to sleep a while."

She did not hear the question. A shadow crossed her face for the first time since the glory of the awakening. For the moment the young wife had forgotten what the dawn would bring her. *He* had been the only one in her line of vision; somehow the woman in her had left out of the count the others that would share his society in those first sweet days in her home.

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A bit unreasonably she now thought of Mrs. Wachs and Sarah Vissers as intruders who desecrated the sanctity of their privacy.

"What is it, dear?" he asked anxiously as she did not answer.

"Nothing, nothing; oh, no, no, I do not want to sleep." The eyes were bright again and quite a bit wistful.

"But could n't we have our breakfast, just for this once, in your study? It will be our first breakfast together, dear."

She could not know how hard it was for him not to yield to this longing of hers for the real touch of home with no other eyes to look on their happiness. But instantly he was master of himself again and he knew that it would never do. Their only chance lay in facing the issue boldly. Their movements from the very first would have to pass the keenest scrutiny. Anything they did that did not seem to be entirely above board would give rise to a kind of comment that made his face hot when he thought of it.

Almost without giving voice to what he felt he made the situation clear to her, and she yielded. She too began to feel the responsibilities as well as the glories of love, and after a brief struggle for the privacy that seems an inalienable right to the young bride, she took up the burden, determined to stand or fall by the side of her husband, relying on his love and wisdom to lead her steps aright.

"My husband!" she exclaimed in an awe-charged whisper, when he had descended the narrow stairway.



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A few moments later she was combing her hair in preparation for the ordeal.

Out in the kitchen Mrs. Wachs stopped in her work two or three times and listened to the sounds issuing from the minister's bedroom.

"What 's he talkin' in his sleep for?" she wondered. "Néver does that otherwise; but that 's what comes of stayin' out so late at night. Where he can have been I can't make out. It must have been most ten o'clock when he came home; at least I 'd been asleep for ever so long. I hope to goodness —"

She did not finish the sentence but she was thinking of Sarah. The minister's housekeeper had never been able to become reconciled to his having brought that unfortunate young woman to the parsonage. She shared the prejudices of her neighbors in matters of this kind.

"Well, Mrs. Wachs," said Dominie Van Weelen opening the door, "good morning; you are up bright and early as usual."

She started and was too surprised to say "Good morning." Had he been talking to himself while wide awake? Only a moment ago she had heard the sound of a voice in his room.

"Early to bed and early to rise," said the minister gayly, to fill in the gap in the conversation.

"That 's what I always say," answered Mrs. Wachs, taking his words seriously. "How late was it not when you came home last night?" she asked with the frank curiosity of the country.

"Oh, well, you see," stammered the minister, at a

loss how to break the news, "I had been in De Stad and —"

"What, walkin'?"

"No, in my canoe."

"*Heden, heden!* What do you think of that!"

She looked at the minister curiously. There was something about him this morning she could not fathom — a mystery in his bashful attitude that immediately put her into a whirl of curiosity. But it was never very easy for her to ask questions of the minister, and she was silent. The minister longed for the easy flow of questions that he had so often heard her put without the slightest apology, to others. He dreaded the plunge. Suddenly somehow he found himself timid, and totally deprived of the straightforward aggressiveness that usually characterized his every action.

"I have something to tell you," he began. Mrs. Wachs stood expectant, her right hand holding the bread knife poised over an enormous loaf. So there was some basis for her suspicion after all? But she hoped to goodness it was not again a case of a fallen woman. She felt keenly the opprobrium that Dominie Van Weelen's connection with Sarah Vissers had brought upon the household.

The minister's eyes blinked for a moment as they met the straightforward gaze of the housekeeper. Then he returned to the stairway door.

"Wait a moment," he called back over his shoulder.

When he reappeared Nellie was leaning on his

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arm, and when the pair had issued through the narrow doorway they stood there her left hand clasped in his right. The minister's eyes still blinked and Nellie seemed timid and ill at ease. She wore the simple gown that had served the previous evening as a wedding dress. He looked at her and she looked at him, and they looked for all the world like an eloping pair asking a parent's forgiveness. But no explanation came from him and the tension was becoming painful. He was suddenly overcome with a distressing timidity.

"Mrs. Wachs," began Nellie gently, "did the minister ask you to put an extra plate on the table for breakfast this morning?"

"*Heden! heden!*" exclaimed the surprised house-keeper, ignoring for the moment the girl's question. "Who would have thought you was in the house here? I knew I heard Dominie talk to someone this morning," she added triumphantly, recalling her soliloquy in the kitchen. "And what will your father say — you out here? To think that it is Nellie Harmdyk of all people what spends the night here in Dominie's house."

The minister by this time had found his voice.

"You must not call her Nellie Harmdyk," he said in an attempt at playfulness; "she is now *Juffrouw* Van Weelen." His heart thumped as he said the words.

The bread knife fell to the floor with a clatter.

"What? — What's that?" she said almost in a gasp.

"Yes, dear Mrs. Wachs," said Nellie, her eyes shining, "the minister is now my husband."

Nellie advanced to the housekeeper with outstretched arms, her whole being yearning for a motherly embrace that would seem as a blessing on their union. Stepping back in dismay the housekeeper put her hands behind her and Nellie's hands dropped limply by her side, while the color suddenly fled from her cheeks. The almost involuntary gesture of the housekeeper was eloquent with meaning; moreover, it was charged with a premonition of what the minister and his bride might expect throughout the entire congregation.

Instantly bashfulness forsook Dominie Van Weelen and he hardened his heart against the inevitable ordeal. He would compel his people to accept her and honor her, or — He did not finish the sentence but there was a light in his eyes that carried on the thought.

"From now on, Mrs. Wachs," he said gently but with decision, "Nellie will be the mistress of this house. I am sure you will find her an easy mistress, and — you, dear, will find Mrs. Wachs a very good housekeeper," he added turning to Nellie.

Mrs. Wachs was too stunned to make reply. Mechanically picking up the bread knife from the floor she wiped it on a dishcloth and resumed the cutting of the bread.

All that forenoon while Dominie Van Weelen forced himself to remain up in his study to make an attempt at working Mrs. Wachs was silent and

thoughtful. She addressed the new mistress timidly whenever it was necessary to address her at all; but for the most part she remained aloof and distant. Although she knew Nellie intimately the shock of the morning seemed to have put a bar between them which Nellie hoped time would remove. To lessen the tension she went up to the minister's study. He eagerly threw down his fountain pen, moved his chair away from the table and found a place for her. She nestled up to him and instantly forgot the cloud that vaguely seemed to threaten their happiness.

The door of the study was open and as the minister, thrilled by the soft touch of Nellie's hair, lifted his head, he saw Sarah standing in the hall. The girl in passing from her own room to the stairway had suddenly been arrested by the picture of young love in the study, and she stopped as though impelled by an outside force. There was infinite yearning in her heart, and the eyes that looked down upon the scene were full of tears. Ashamed of her intrusion she quickly stepped back, but not before Nellie had heard the step. The young wife jumped up ashamed, and seeing it was Sarah she went to her. Intuitively guessing the girl's needs she took her by the hand and led her back to her room. The minister looked after the retreating figure ruefully, for the first time perhaps sorry that Sarah was in the house.

"Yes, dear Sarah, last night," Nellie was explaining. "It was all so very sudden, and how do you think people will take it?" she added anxiously.

Like the minister, Nellie too was thinking only of

self in this first flush of her happiness. It seemed so divinely perfect that she would resent any hint of anything that might mar it.

"How can they take it any other way, dear?" said Sarah. "It was sudden but there can be no harm in that."

Nellie kissed her impulsively and the girl now openly burst into tears. No, there was nothing the matter with her; she was merely nervous and she did not want Nellie to be anxious about her. Nellie was not very anxious; she was too much occupied thinking about her own happiness. She was brought back to realities however when Sarah said:

"And now you have a real home of your own."

It was said so wistfully and with such ineffable longing in every syllable that the young wife felt a dart of pain shoot through her heart.

"You must tell me, Sarah," she said gently, "and let me help you to get a home of your own, too."

For answer the girl let her tears flow freely. She clung to her secret seemingly more obstinately than ever.

Mrs. Wachs was face to face with one of those rare crises when a person must think and act independently of the thoughts and actions of others. Here was a marriage decidedly irregular according to the standards of her class. But she did not know for certain how the people of Harlem would take the matter. Would they accept the marriage as something that could no longer be helped, like a father who gives his blessing because he cannot do otherwise?

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Or would they repudiate the minister as unworthy of his calling?

At the dinner table she said very little, but her presence banished all gayety from the meal. Sarah did her best to laugh in her pathetic way and the minister tried to be natural in his boyishness. Looking at his young wife across the table he asked her how her bread had turned out. For answer she looked at Mrs. Wachs as though trying to gauge the particular tone of gayety that would fit the occasion. There was nothing in the uncertain look of the housekeeper to reassure the young wife, and she said in a weak attempt that she reckoned there must have been something the matter with the yeast.

All that afternoon Mrs. Wachs was lost in thought. Suddenly before the supper hour she made up her mind. Gathering the belongings she had in the house together she wrapped what she would need immediately into a little bundle and went up to the minister in his study.

"I think you don't need a housekeeper no more now," she said, "now that you've got a wife what can do the work." From her bearing the minister gathered that she had left many things unsaid.

"But, my dear Mrs. Wachs," he protested, "you don't mean to say you won't stay with us? We shall need you more than ever now."

"No, I'm goin' tonight," she said.

"Tonight? But where will you go?"

"Oh, I can go to my sister's for a while."

"But why in such a hurry about it? If you do

not wish to stay, why not stay a few weeks until we are used to the new system, and then meanwhile you could be looking for another place."

But Mrs. Wachs reiterated that she was going that evening. There was that in her tone and bearing that puzzled the minister for a moment. Then all at once he discovered where the difference lay. There was no longer in her attitude toward him that unquestioning admiration that partook of the nature of worship which she had hitherto held. Somehow without saying so she gave the minister the impression that the divinity she had given her worship had fallen into a heap of crumbling clay.

When he told Nellie of Mrs. Wachs' departure she turned pale and a look of fear came into her eyes.

"It's coming," she said tremblingly, "what shall we do?"

He comforted her and made her forget for the time being the impending shadow. But that night long after she had fallen asleep, her dark hair straggling over the pillow and her bosom rising and falling rhythmically, he lay staring into the darkness, thinking.



## CHAPTER XXV

### AN INTERRUPTED CHRISTENING

CURIOSLY the members of Dominie Van Weelen's church fixed upon the fact that the marriage had been performed by a Methodist minister as the point of attack. They strongly condemned the haste of the proceeding, and many were to be found who argued with a good deal of warmth that Nellie had shown herself an undutiful child in going against the express commands of her father; the minister also had been guilty of grave impropriety in accepting her on this basis. But when the story of the marriage became common property after Mrs. Wachs had left the parsonage, all agreed that a Methodist minister solemnizing the marriage of *their* minister was monstrous. The whole affair was sinful and unseemly; the minister had forgotten the dignity of the cloth — the Christian Reformed cloth at that — all this did not admit of argument, but it was passed over as of secondary importance. But that a Methodist minister had read the service was almost in the realm of the unthinkable and the people stood aghast.

"I don't know as I could say offhand just on what points the Methodists wander from the truth," said Dirk Stormzand contemplatively stroking his beard,

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"but I know they are so far from Calvin that I would n't let my daughter be married by one of their ministers, let alone a *minister* bein' married that way."

"And they believe in baptizin' grown up people," put in Mrs. Stormzand. Her husband cast a reprov- ing look in her direction, as though meaning to say, "My dear woman, don't display your ignorance be- fore others." Aloud he said:

"No, you've got them mixed up with the Baptists. *They* believe in baptizin' people when they have come to years of discretion, and they base their belief on St. Paul baptizin' the jailor and on —" and he went on giving some half dozen passages that *seemed* to favor the heretical belief. The next moment he deftly refuted each argument and proved conclusively that the belief in adult baptism was unquestionably a heresy.

"Well, then," said Mrs. Stormzand a bit piqued by her husband's correction, "what *do* the Metho- dists believe in?"

"Yes, that's what I'd like to know — *what* do they believe in?" Mrs. Harm Zandbergen reenforced her. With her taciturn husband she had come to the Stormzand home to talk the situation over with one on whose judgment she would rely. Her husband was, according to her way of thinking, showing a criminal interest in the potato crop just at this time of crisis when he should have kept his mind clear for higher things, and she took him, all unwilling, to be edified by the theologian's discourse upon this ques- tion of vital importance.

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"Well, now, as to that," answered Stormzand, meditating deeply on the question, "I don't know as you would understand it offhand goin' deep into it as I have done; but I need only charge them with Armenianism and you will know something of what to think of them."

"Armenianism!" gasped Mrs. Zandbergen. "Did n't I tell you, Harm, you would n't be sorry you came here?"

Her husband looked mildly interested. He perforce affected an imitation of being horrified but he straightway lapsed back into solving the problem of how he was going to get the fall plowing done before harvesting the potato crop.

There was triumph in the look of the theologian as he went on to hand out to his admirers the scraps of information he had picked up about Armenianism in the course of his theological researches.

"And we have come to that," wailed Mrs. Zandbergen, "that *our* Dominie should have to be married by a minister of such a church. What will happen next? When I was a girl —"

Her husband groaned inwardly when he heard this familiar prelude to a lengthy harangue and settled himself comfortably to think out various agricultural problems until someone should find the courage to interrupt her. The harangue was this time destined to be short. Harm Zandbergen had not reckoned with Dirk Stormzand's uncontrollable desire to impart information about the weaknesses of the Methodist church.

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"And you know," he broke in at an opportune moment, "that they call themselves the Methodist Episcopal church. Now, we all know what *Episcopal* means."

"*Ach! ach!*" wailed Mrs. Zandbergen, comprehendingly, "that's almost as bad as Catholics, and that *our* Dominie must be married by such a man!"

Having less respect for his learning, because she was better acquainted with his weaknesses than the others, the theologian's wife showed less admiration than they, but nevertheless she was considerably impressed by the indictment he had managed to build up against the minister.

"I always said we'd get into trouble with him," said Mrs. Zandbergen; "don't you remember, Harm, as how I told you on the way home the very same Sunday when Elder Thielman read his letter of acceptance that he did n't look no good to me? That short little letter did n't look like one from a minister at all, and I says, what we need in these days when the young folks are getting so frivolous, is a man what holds fast to the beliefs of the fathers."

"*Ja, ja,*" said the theologian's wife, anxious to seem to take an active part in the conversation.

"And what does Jan Harmdyk say about it?" put in Harm Zandbergen.

"What can he say about it?" snapped his wife; "what would you say if your daughter did so scandalous a thing? I said from the first," turning to the others in the room, "that Jan Harmdyk had a good deal of right on his side."

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"But that drain did us a lot of good," put in her husband, now in defense of something that he could understand.

"I ain't sayin' but what it did," was the answer, "but I still say that Jan Harmdyk had a lot of right on his side all the time. It was n't the drain what set him against the minister. You remember how he fought against him in the meetin' when he was called. He saw clearer than what the others saw."

"And you told me to vote for him," objected her husband.

"I ain't denyin' that neither," she answered with dignity. "How could I know what kind of a man he was, because Dirk here will bear me out that he kin preach good."

Dirk Stormzand nodded sympathetically.

"But as soon as I heard that letter," the woman resumed, "I could have told you, and I did tell you that he was no good for our congregation." She felt it as a personal triumph that her prognostication of evil had been found correct.

"Jan Harmdyk ain't sayin' nothing about the whole affair," said Dirk. "I sounded him yesterday, but he kept as still as a mouse."

In fact Nellie's father was about the only one in the community who did not discuss the subject early and late. The marriage, and especially the Methodist minister's connection with the affair, formed the sole topic of conversation in every household. Somehow, he could not quite tell in what way, Jan was losing his grip on something. There was a vague

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uneasiness in the background of his thoughts as of something he could not control. Repeatedly he dashed the feeling from him with a gesture of impatience; he would bend circumstances to his will, come what might. But insinuatingly the feeling of uneasiness came back upon him and it had to be reckoned with almost as a tangible opposition.

All his life he had been in the habit of making his children do his bidding like so many puppets. Nellie, it is true, had occasionally shown herself a trifle unruly and he had even been compelled to resort to compromise with her on one or two occasions; but much of this he had laid at the door of too much education, and there was always the expectation that a few months of the country would put her back in the grooves where she belonged. And now, without consulting him, precipitately, she had cast herself shamelessly at the head of the worst enemy he had on earth. It stunned him and numbed in him the natural feeling of resentment and bitter hatred that would ordinarily have welled up.

And Ezra, to whom of all his children he had pinned his faith, puzzled him lately. The boy was moody and silent and he repeatedly opposed his will to that of his father as he had done in the latter's going to consult a lawyer. The electric current of a common interest that had existed for a moment between father and son in their opposition to the minister had been broken. Previous to that period of conspiracy there had also been opposition between the two, but it had been different, Jan felt. He had at

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least had some hold on the boy and he had always been able to show that his own will had the mastery. But now, although Ezra was docile enough in the ordinary things, in other matters, as for instance the case with the lawyer, Jan was impotent. He felt that the boy had escaped from him in some mysterious way; but just how he could not analyze.

There was something in all this that the stern old man could not understand, and mystery with him was almost synonymous with fear. The greatest shock he received, however, was when Baby Johannes heard of the marriage. Having always looked upon the puny child as one whom he could almost crush with a look, he found it well nigh inconceivable that the boy should have a thought or a wish that could in any way be antagonistic to his own. When they told him of the marriage however, he exclaimed with shining eyes:

“Goody! I just knew he would do it!”

Jan looked at the boy with questioning eyes for a moment but made no comment. He must have time to think it all out. Elements had entered into the reckoning that he had failed to make provision for, and he had an unpleasant sense of the futility of anything he might attempt to do to affect matters. Other elements were destined to enter in that would serve to intensify the vague feeling of fear and perplexity in the background of his thoughts.

Those were busy days for the farmers of Harlem. The fall work on the farm demanded their attention and still the marriage of the minister could not be

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neglected. It would never do to let the work of the Kingdom suffer because the plowing had to be done. How could they expect a blessing on next year's harvest if they did that? A few there were, and Klaas Thielman among them, who were disposed to be lenient and to give the minister another chance, but those few were not given a respectful hearing.

That Dirk Stormzand should introduce the question at the meeting of the consistory was inevitable. The deacons and elders met in special session to which the minister was not invited. This crisis, the consistory felt, demanded extraordinary measures.

"It is not for me to say," began the theologian with dignity and confidence, "as to how we should handle a matter like what we have gathered for here tonight, but you will all agree with me when I say that we must act in some way if we mean to keep this church, of which God has appointed us guardians, pure before the Lord."

There were vigorous nods of approval from the other members of the consistory; even Klaas Thielman was impelled by the preponderance of the sentiment to nod an unwilling assent. But after this first concession he regained confidence in his own point of view and all the evening he fought for leniency. He urged all the points that were in the minister's favor: his unquestioned ability as a preacher, his devotion to the cause, the high-mindedness and irreproachable character of his bride. A favorable verdict might conceivably have been won for the minister if the fact that the ceremony had been performed by a Metho-



dist minister had not been the stumbling block. There was an overwhelming public opinion in the community against the minister, and the consistory could not do otherwise than show their disapproval.

Dirk Stormzand was instructed to draw up articles to be presented to the classis that would have to pass final judgment on the matter. The deposition of a minister was far too serious a matter for a consistory to decide on on its own responsibility. The authority of a higher body was to be called in, and Dirk worded the document in such a way, incorporating in it the feeling against the minister among his parishioners so emphatically, that the classis would have very little choice.

When Klaas Thielman announced the result of the meeting to Dominie Van Weelen the latter gave no sign that the decision of his consistory was a blow to him.

"They are taking steps to depose me," he said almost cheerfully to Nellie that evening when the two were alone in their room.

"Oh, Charles!" The young wife burst into tears. She felt the dumb misery of the woman who thinks she is dragging down the man she loves.

"Now, dear, don't worry; we have done no sin and I am strong and can provide for you."

The words had a curious effect upon *Juffrouwe* Van Weelen; for the moment they made her almost cheerful. Any other minister, she thought, at least any other Dutch minister she had ever met, would in a time of trouble have said, "The Lord will provide."

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But somehow the self-reliant words of her husband comforted the young wife more than cant phrases could have done. After all, she thought, she was a woman with a woman's desire that cannot be satisfied with a phrase, however pious. She secretly gloried in the thought that she had married a man who dared stand on his own feet, and who did not care to bolster up his hope with meaningless phrases about the special anxiety of an overruling providence for such as he. The next moment she was blaming herself that she, a minister's wife, should feel anything so human. She wept silent tears, but not altogether tears of regret, at least not as long as her strong husband-lover held her in his arms.

When Sarah's baby had to be baptized there was much speculation among the people of the church about the propriety of administering holy baptism to the child of such a mother. But Dominie Van Weelen almost angrily brushed all opposition aside. By the laws of the church he was compelled to let her submit to a public confession of the error of her way; but that formality over with he would listen to no more opposition.

"He knows anyway," said Mrs. Zandbergen, "that it is only a question of time with him, and so he can do almost as he likes."

In spite of the feeling that had been gathering force against the minister he did not want for an audience the next Sunday morning, the morning when the baptism was to be administered. This unusual ceremony was a big drawing-card and the fact that

Dominie Van Weelen had eloped with the daughter of his worst enemy in the community only a short time before also served to add interest to the service. Not that the members of his church needed urging to attend divine worship; seldom it was that even a five-year-old child was allowed to remain at home. But on this particular Sunday even the aged and the decrepit refused to be left at home, and nearly every member of the rival Reformed Church occupied a pew, or at least as many of them as could crowd into the tiny building. There was a hush of expectancy as the minister walked up the little aisle.

During the sermon no reference was made to the subject that was uppermost in the minds of all. There was the same fire in the minister's voice, the same enthusiasm that had carried his listeners irresistibly away many a time. In fact, for the time being, he almost forgot about the strained relations existing in the congregation as his subject grew upon him. The discourse was largely extempore, because the events of the week had crowded out serious work; but there was no hesitancy and the deep clear tones rang through the building with a conviction and a power that clearly showed the speaker was not by any means "down and out." The voice made many of his parishioners uneasy for the moment, and they turned their attention with alacrity to the other sensation of the baptizing of Sarah's child.

The girl occupied a chair near the pulpit and sat soothing her baby while the minister's words rang out clear and almost challengingly through the church.

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Somehow they gave her a sense of security, and the helpless fear that had blanched her cheeks when she first entered the building and felt the eyes of her neighbors on her, gave way to a feeling of peace. She had drunk her cup to the dregs and there was exaltation in her heart that even when she had entered the valley of the shadow she had not yielded to the pleas of the minister and his wife to expose her betrayer. She tasted the joy of the martyr, self-imposed though her martyrdom was; and, more than that, it was sweet to think she had not brought sorrow to others.

There was a stretching of necks and a hushed expectancy throughout the congregation when Dominie Van Weelen, in accordance with the custom of the church, asked the young mother to arise. Sarah timidly arose and faced the minister in the pulpit reading the formula for the administering of holy baptism.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the back of the church and Dominie Van Weelen looked up from his book for a moment. He caught only a confused blur of impressions, and with the idea of keeping a grip on himself he read on in clear measured tones.

Heavy footfalls resounded in the carpetless aisle and everyone in the church looked from Sarah to the place whence the commotion issued. Dominie Van Weelen refused to let himself be interrupted and kept on reading. Not till the footfalls were near the front of the church did he notice that it was Ezra Harmdyk stalking clumsily up the aisle.

Nellie had told Dominie Van Weelen something of

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the change that had taken place in Ezra, but the minister had had no opportunity to talk to the boy himself and he was much puzzled as to his present intention. But in spite of the excitement in the room the measured tones continued and the voice did not for a moment lose its steadiness.

Ezra stepped to the side of Sarah. For the first time since the reading of the formula began she raised her eyes from the face of the sleeping infant in her arms. Seeing Ezra she turned deathly pale and the child would have fallen from her grasp if the boy had not taken it up clumsily, at the same time supporting the woman at his side.

Dominie Van Weelen had ceased reading and he stood looking down upon the scene with a bewildered appreciation of the dramatic element in the situation. That the congregation shared this feeling of suspense was made clear when a spontaneous sigh of relief arose from them as the minister, after a moment's pause, resumed the reading of the formula.

With eyes cast down and big clumsy hands trembling at the touch of the delicate finery in which the infant was dressed, Ezra stood listening to the words of the minister. In Sarah's heart was a misery that could not be uttered now that the crown of martyrdom had been snatched away from her. Mechanically she spoke the words that were expected of her and sat down as though the waves of shame were overwhelming her.

Instead of the long prayer that usually followed the administering of holy baptism Dominie Van

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Weelen pronounced the single sentence, "There shall be more joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that have no need of repentance," and when the congregation had been dismissed he took Ezra's hand and looked into the boy's eyes with a long steady look, and the message that that look conveyed was the tribute of a strong man to the strength of one who has sounded the depth of his weakness.

He put his hand on Sarah's head with a fatherly touch in token of blessing. A few who had lingered in the back of the church saw him join Ezra's hand in hers; and in Sarah's heart dawned a peace she could not understand. Her sentiment for the father of her child was superficial, but the dread was suddenly taken away that the man and the woman whom of all others in this world she worshiped would be crushed by the shame when it should be discovered that it was Nellie's brother who had betrayed her. The little group slowly made its way to the parsonage, the minister leading the way as though in a procession of honor. He remembered with a feeling of humility, such as is not often the chief characteristic of the strong, that a Man more perfect than he had always esteemed it a privilege to be in the presence of repentance.

"I did not want to do it," explained Ezra. "I did not want to do it this morning, and I came to church because I was afraid to stay away. But ever since you knocked me down that evening I've cared a great deal what you think of me; and when you was preach-

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ing I could n't stand it no longer. I tried to leave the church but I did not dare — and then all at once I was in the front and it was all over before I knew just what was happening." The big hand of the boy trembled as he recalled the scene.

On Nellie's face there was a look of glorified confidence in the essential greatness and wonderful nobility of the man who had chosen her for his mate; and even Sarah showed by a wan smile of comprehension that she understood something of what made the hour eventful in the lives of others.

At the church stables Mrs. Harm Zandbergen tucked the duster as carefully over her lap as usual and watched her methodical husband with the same impatience as usual while he was drawing the reins through the rings on the harness. But when he had climbed to the front seat of the platform buggy and started, she did not open a conversation about the days when she was a girl. There appeared to be some things that could make even Mrs. Zandbergen look thoughtful.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE SNOW BEGINS TO MELT

**H**OW Ezra faced his father that afternoon, leading Sarah by the hand up the narrow path that led to the farmhouse, he never made a topic of conversation in after years. Courage often comes in flashes, and after the excitement of the morning, the gray light of the commonplace was again beating down upon the boy. It was one thing to arise in church and make reparation for a wrong that had been haunting him for weeks, and quite another thing to step up to a stern old father and say, "Behold the woman I have betrayed."

Neither was the ordeal an easy one for Sarah. She hung her head in the presence of the old man and the unreasoning fear of him that used to possess her returned. Fortunately she soon found relief in nursing her baby.

Jan Harmdyk spoke never a word. Not having been in church and no one of the neighbors having conveyed to him the story of the excitement of the morning, the shock of sudden discovery unmanned him for a moment. Then the realization smote him forcibly that another one of his own flesh and blood had turned against him. Only Baby Johannes was left and his allegiance had been transferred to the



minister months ago. There he stood, alone and deserted — a lonely figure upon whom the light of evening was beginning to fall. For him the days were drawing nigh when desire would fail, when the silver cord would be loosed and the bowl be broken at the fountain, and he could not even look forward to basking in the merry laughter of grandchildren, because from his point of view they were the children of shame. In sheer self-pity he turned away without a word, and going to the barn he rested his elbow against the door of the wheat bin to think. That he did not order both Ezra and Sarah to leave the house showed he was not himself. Never before had any doubts of himself caused the necessity of planning how to act.

Because no opposition was offered Sarah remained in the Harmdyk home for the present. The next day at the parsonage she and Ezra went through the ceremony that legalized their union.

She shuddered slightly when Ezra took her hand; and calloused though he was to many of the finer feelings of life, he knew then that whatever sentiment she might have had for him at one time — sentiment that had helped toward her fall in time of weakness — there was no love for him on her part now. And the same sentiment that had kept him so long silent when the community beheld the girl's shame was not dead in him. If he had been a free agent he would not have chosen Sarah for his mate. But the road lay stretching out before him and there was no choice. At least pity had been born in him — pity for the

helpless infant and the no less helpless mother, and that alone made his life richer than it had been since his mother died. The pure gold of the conjugal love was not for them, but in the secondary grooves in which the course of their lives must run there was still many a comfort that the years would bring, but which now they could not see, and a growing tenderness and sympathy in their lot.

Nellie found Sarah weeping in her old room upstairs and she tried to comfort her. They were not the tears so often shed at a marriage ceremony, and somehow Nellie felt that they were different.

"It is all right, dear," she whispered, "and you will have a home now and soon you will be as happy as I am."

"Oh, no, no," protested Sarah, and there was conviction in her words. She was thinking of the day when she had unwillingly surprised the minister and his wife in his study; she knew that that kind of love was not for her. But she bravely dried her eyes and following her husband to the farmhouse, she took up the burden of her life.

One effect the excitement caused by the interrupted christening had was to delay the action against Dominie Van Weelen by the consistory. There was not room in the minds of the Harlem folk for many sensations at the same time. They were not accustomed to glaring front pages of daily newspapers, and unlike the man of the city, they still assimilated with a delicious sense of relative values the daily events of their community. But the indictment had

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been drawn up and time would inevitably lead the people back to it.

Meanwhile Ezra Harmdyk had decided to join the church.

"I don't know if I'm good enough," he said to the minister, "and I don't know if you'll take me."

"I am all the more glad to take you because you feel that way about it."

"But, you see," urged Ezra, "I ain't what you would call converted; at least I don't think I am. I don't know next to nothing about the Bible and the catechism, even though father made us study them all the time — it's you what I really believe in more than anything else."

"That would be a poor basis on which to seek admission; but you have shown the fruits of repentance, and there is nothing really mysterious about conversion as many of our people seem to think. It is a choosing of the path that leads to the light. That's all."

At the conclusion of the sermon the following Sunday Dominie Van Weelen paused for a moment before he said,

"Ezra Harmdyk has made confession of faith and will be confirmed as a member of this church two weeks from today."

This "conversion" was bound to arouse further animated discussion in the homes of the Harlem folk. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been no mean triumph for a minister of the church to have achieved the "conversion" of Ezra. In any event,

it would have been much talked about, somewhat as slum workers always point to the man who has been snatched as a brand from the burning, the man who has been raised up by them after he had fallen as low as man can and live. Ezra was not bad in the same way. He was a healthy, burly, hard-working boy. But for many years he had shown an incorrigible disposition in matters of religion. He had positively refused sometimes to attend services and he was known to be addicted to the frequent use of the Dutch equivalent for "damn"! He was always pointed out as the example of an irreverent son of a pious father, much the same way as many a minister's son is regarded in most communities. When he took his place by Sarah's side at the christening the people were stunned for a moment, but soon after they argued that this was at least characteristic of Ezra; he had never yet been properly impressed by a church building or in fact by anything that pertained to religion. The people were quick to discover the element of "grandstand" that was actually present when Ezra made his sensational restitution to the woman he had wronged.

But when he followed this act up with confession of faith many of the members of Dominie Van Weelen's church were impressed.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Mrs. Harm Zandbergen from the rear seat of the platform buggy, "who would have thought it? Him the most reckless boy in the church!"

Her husband as usual busied himself with extract-

ing tobacco from his pouch, but even he looked more interested than his spouse had learned to expect from him.

"If it is only a real conversion," she continued; "but young people are so easily influenced these days. When I was a girl —"

But whatever his neighbors might think about Ezra's motives in joining the church, he was enthusiastic with the irrepressible enthusiasm of the proselyte. He overruled his father's objections that were however but feebly urged now that the old man seemed somehow to have lost his grip. Even when Ezra became a warm and open champion of the minister and his sister Jan did not fly into a rage. He never relented, but his anger against his daughter and her husband seemed to have taken on a negative quality.

"There's a minister what I call a minister," said Ezra combatively whenever Dominie Van Weelen was discussed in the community. "I always had an idea that religion was for people who didn't have ginger enough for nothing else. But when a man what can knock me down says religion is all right, that religion's good enough for me."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Jan with a sudden flash of his old resentment, "to stick up like that for that hypocrite what seduced your sister."

"That ain't so," answered Ezra wounded by the word his father had employed, "he married her fair and square and I don't blame Nell a bit. I'd done

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the same thing if I'd been a girl; he's worth twenty other ministers."

The old man grunted something unintelligible and left the house.

With the impulsive boldness that had given him the reputation of having no respect for the House of God, Ezra made a little speech to his neighbors at his confirmation two weeks afterwards. He had been wrong, entirely wrong, in the fight at the church door; the whole trouble that had set the people of the church against the minister had started with him and his father. Dominie Van Weelen had done the right thing at every turn. He went as far in debasing himself as he had ever done in defying local sentiment in matters of religion. It was all a rude and untutored way of saying, "I am the chief of sinners"; and through it all a feeling of exaltation was not entirely absent that he was doing something unusual that his neighbors would talk about for many weeks to come.

"You have done for me what no other minister could have done," he concluded turning to Dominie Van Weelen; "you have learned me to see my sin and you have brought me to Christ."

Dominie Van Weelen stood with bowed head while this rude eulogy was being pronounced upon him. Although he was not entirely unaware of the love of sensationalism on the part of Ezra, yet he felt the leaven of sincerity that ran through the words. When it was over and he said softly, "Let us pray," there was a tremor in his voice and several old ladies

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in the audience wiped their eyes with heavily starched handkerchiefs.

The confirmation was decidedly unusual. It was unheard of for anyone in Harlem to say more than the "yes" expected of him on such occasions. But the people had been prepared by a series of sensations for this climacteric sensation, and it did not leave them so totally stunned as it would have done if the other events had not gone before. The unheard of had become the usual in Harlem.

Mrs. Harm Zandbergen was perhaps the first to give a sign that the words of Ezra had not fallen on barren ground. When she climbed to the back seat of the family buggy her eyes were still a little red and her handkerchief looked as though it would have to go through the various stages of the family wash before it could again do service another Sunday.

"I always said he was n't so bad as they was tryin' to make him," she said when her stolid husband did not offer to open the conversation himself.

"Which one was you talkin' about?" he asked apparently interested.

"Which one but the minister!" she snapped with considerable warmth.

"I didn't know but as you might be meanin' Ezra," said her husband in even tones, "not but that I don't agree with you, but I was thinkin' as you used to talk different that maybe you did n't mean the minister."

Instantly Harm Zandbergen regretted his unlucky speech. The flood of words broke forth with resist-

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less power, his wife making it her task to convince him of the consistency of her inconsistency in regard to Dominie Van Weelen.

"*Ja, ja*," he broke in once or twice, "you mean that was like the time when you was a girl," but his wife would not be lured into this subject that she usually found so very fascinating. Like the politician who changes front, she tried to justify herself with abundance of words.

Ezra supplemented his statement at the confirmation with personal work in the congregation. Because he was now a member of the church he could really take part in the deliberations of the congregation, and the very next day he was making himself felt as a molder of public opinion, as the newspapers express it. He had inherited from his stern father something of a genius for organizing men and women into working bodies, and in the same way that his father had gone about organizing the people of Harlem against Dominie Van Weelen the son now went about organizing them in his behalf.

Klaas Thielman was the first one to come to his support.

"I ain't doin' this, Ezra," said he, "because I had a scrap with your father, but I always thought a heap of Dominie Van Weelen, and nothing hurt me more than that I was one of the consistory that voted to bring him before the classis."

"I know it, I know it," said Ezra warmly, "that's why I come to you first. Have they sent that letter what Dirk Stormzand got up to the classis already?"



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Klaas Thielman flushed slightly as though caught doing something reprehensible. Then realizing he was talking to a friend of the minister he confided to Ezra,

"I am the oldest in the consistory, now that your father is gone, and I was supposed to send that letter to the classis; but I held off till now because I just hated to do it. Do you think that was wrong?" he asked anxiously.

"Not a bit of it," Ezra did not hesitate to answer; "if I was you I would n't send it till you have another meetin', because depend upon it, you and me are going to make the people think different about Dominie Van Weelen."

Klaas Thielman was fired by Ezra's confidence and the two set out to conquer the congregation for the pastor. It was not so hard a task as they had anticipated. Many, like Mrs. Harm Zandbergen, had boldly defended the tears they had shed when Ezra made his famous speech; others more timidly had gradually conveyed the same impression in hints and suggestions to their husbands or fathers or children, as the case might be; and the sentiment in favor of the indicted pastor was becoming stronger right along. Only the unifying touch of the arguments of Ezra and Klaas Thielman was necessary to develop this sentiment into a definite movement that could not be resisted.

Before the week was over even Dirk Stormzand admitted he was sorry the indictment had been drawn up and sent off; if it were still in the power of the

consistory to do so he would be willing to reconsider their action. This is what Klaas Thielman had been waiting for and the explanation he gave for not sending the document on its way was not very closely scrutinized by his fellow consistory members.

As if to make up for the intended injury to the minister and perhaps because they felt that the pastor's weddingless marriage should not go unrecognized by them the women in the congregation started a movement to raise his salary fifty dollars a year.

"He's got a wife now," said they, "and needs more money to keep up a family. It's a great deal of money, fifty dollars, but a minister must live higher than us."

When it was announced to Dominie Van Weelen by Klaas Thielman that his salary had been raised, he stood aghast. He had lived very much out of touch with his congregation since his marriage and the change of sentiment had not become apparent to him or Nellie. Rushing off to his wife who sat reading in his study he told her the glad news. He was as buoyant and hopeful as a school boy. Instantly her mood responded to his.

"Oh, Charles, dearest," she said, with emotion-shaken voice, "I'm so glad you can stay. Now we can begin to do all those beautiful things you said you would like to do in Harlem. Now you can begin to melt the snow — do you remember?"

"*Begin to melt the snow!*" he cried gayly, "I don't need to begin — the snow is melting, it's melting."

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She looked at him proudly, and in that moment she felt that he was right; or if not, she was sure his words would soon come true. *She* would make the people see how proud they should be to have for a pastor a man who had been ready to strip himself of dignity and divinity for the sake of a woman. And she would make them understand that to fuse the strength of the spirit with the power of the flesh is to make a man both human and divine. This would be her task in the great work that through him had fired her imagination more than the psychology of the Romantic Movement had ever done.

The fight at the church door, like so many another near-tragedy, gradually began to assume a funny aspect.

"I'd a given my old stem-winder to have seen him lick Ezra," snickered an old farmer. "He was too much for Jan Harmdyk too. That's what I call quick work in marryin', but Nellie knows a man when she sees one." And he accompanied the words by significantly feeling of the muscle of his arm. "An' he kin preach like the best of 'em, believe me, he kin preach!"

The minister stood at his study window watching the sun sink slowly behind the marshes along the river. He had been reading Tennyson's "Guinevere"—it should have been Brakel or Smetegeld, his parishioners would have said—but happily they did not suspect that their hard-muscled minister loved poetry. As the twilight came on, and the warm

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haze on the water melted into dark shadows, the grand vision of the poet stirred him somehow mysteriously with the physical joy of living. The book lay upon the window-sill and the minister involuntarily clinched his fists with the consciousness of strength and manhood. In his pulses beat the blood of achievement, and in his brain the poet's vision gave birth to visions of his own — of a community reclaimed from prejudice and intolerance, of himself preaching to the people the religion of manhood, of the union of two weak, struggling churches in the brotherhood of Christ.

"Your young men shall see visions," he whispered to himself.

As he turned, Nellie stood beside him. Together they watched the outline of the western horizon glimmer into obscurity. A thrill of joy passed through her as she felt his arm tighten about her. She drew his head down to hers and whispered, "Kiss me, dearest." And together they dedicated themselves anew to the work that lay before them.

THE END

PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW  
SOCIETY











